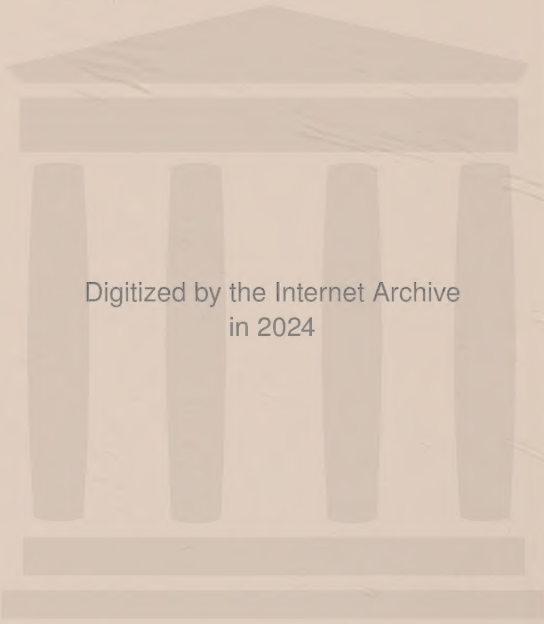


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SPRING DANCE

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

PHILIP BARRY

(Adapted from an original play by
Eleanor Golden and Eloise Barrangon.)

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SPRING DANCE

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Copy of program of first performance of "SPRING DANCE"
as produced at The Empire Theatre, New York:

Jed Harris

Presents

SPRING DANCE

A Comedy in Three Acts

By Philip Barry

(Adapted from an original play by Eleanor Golden
and Eloise Barrangon)

Settings by Stewart Chaney

CAST

MILDRED	Mary Wickes
WALTER BECKETT	Philip Ober
MISS RITCHIE	Marie Bruce
JOHN HATTON	Jack Warren
THE LIPPINCOT	Jose Ferrer
DOC BOYD	Tom Neal
BUCK BUCHANAN	Brooks Bowman
MADY PLATT	Mary Logan
FRANCES FENN	Peggy O'Donnell
ALEX BENSON	Louise Platt
KATE MCKIM	Ruth Matteson
SALLY PRESCOTT	Martha Hodge
SAM THATCHER	Richard Kendrick

The action takes place in late May this year in a small house near the campus of a girls' college in New England.

ACT I. *The living room. Late Friday afternoon.*

ACT II.

SCENE I. *ALEX's and KATE's bedroom. Friday midnight.*

SCENE II. *The living room. Saturday afternoon.*

ACT III. *The living room. Saturday night.*

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

JOHN HATTON: *Young, blond and chubby, with a humorous, likeable face.*

THE LIPPINCOT is a year or two older than HAT—
dark, silent, contemptuous.

BUCK BUCHANAN and DOC BOYD are both in their
very early twenties. BUCK is tall, slight, very urbane. DOC is stocky, of definite athletic build.

MADY PLATT is a bright, attractive girl, the author-
ized comedian of the House.

FRANCES FENN is somewhat on the dumb side, and
is considered so by the other girls. She is, how- ever, extremely pretty, childlike and good-natured.

ALEX BENSON is not particularly pretty, but she is
intense, vital, attractive.

KATE MCKIM is like a big sister to ALEX: *likeable, serious, calm and judicious.*

WALTER BECKETT is about thirty-five, *spare, brisk, assured.*

SALLY PRESCOTT is the prom-trotter, *dramatic and self-centered, dashing, loud and attractively vulgar.*

SAM THATCHER is tall, good-looking, *very serious and self-composed.*

MISS RITCHIE is in her late thirties, *rather prim, very New England.*

MILDRED is a plain and independent-minded house-
maid of indefinite age.

SPRING DANCE

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The remodelled living-room of a small New England house. It is still full of the spirit of the antimacassar, the tassel, and bric-a-brac. There are large French doors up Left, opening into a hallway which leads Left to the front door and Right to the dining-room, and rear of the house. At back Right there is also a smaller door which leads to the House-mother's sitting-room. At back Center is a staircase with white treads and upright spokes and brown railings. It is in two sections; the last few steps face directly downstage. At Right, in the rear, there is a bay window giving onto the street. Facing downstage is a large sofa. By a small fireplace, set in the Right wall, there is an easy chair. Occasional tables and chairs are placed conveniently about the room. There is a mirror on the Left side wall. On the tables and mantel are bits of bric-a-brac, a few books, vases, lamps, candlesticks, large sea-shells, china figures and the like, but no ashtrays, or anything that could be used for one, except the fireplace, which is swept spotlessly clean for the warm weather. Down Left is a small telephone stand with an old-fashioned telephone on it. Stuffy though the whole picture may seem, it is an agreeable and a friendly room.*

TIME: *Late afternoon on a sunny late May day.*

AT RISE: *The living-room is empty. The DOOR-BELL rings in the hall. MILDRED, the housemaid, comes in from the door up Left and goes out into the hall. The sound of a screen door opening and closing is heard. MILDRED comes back into the living-room, followed by JOHN HATTON, young, blond and chubby, with a humorous, likeable face.*

MILDRED. Miss Fenn's got a Five O'clock. They all got Five O'locks except Mady—except Miss Platt. She's upstairs. She'll be down, prob'ly.

HAT. (*Calling into the hall*) Come on! Come on in!

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Enters. He is a year or two older than HAT, dark, silent, contemptuous. On his head is a dilapidated felt hat and around his neck, on a leather strap, he wears a small camera. As MILDRED is about to go out, he calls to her:*) Hey! (*MILDRED turns inquiringly. THE LIPPINCOT turns to HAT*) Ask her has our Mr. Thatcher shown up yet.

MILDRED. Who?

HAT. Mr. Thatcher.

MILDRED. No. You're the first. You can sit here. They come straight back from their Five O'locks. (*She goes out rear.*)

HAT. —Sees all, know all; a sterling girl, Mildred. (*He turns to THE LIPPINCOT.*) Well, well, well—

THE LIPPINCOT. Well, what?

HAT. Imagine finding you parked on this of all doorsteps. (*And lights a cigarette.*)

THE LIPPINCOT. Surprise, surprise.

HAT. But how did you happen to come to a dance?

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Waggles his fingers at him*) Smoke me.

HAT. (*Gives him a cigarette*).—and a day ahead of time, at that?

THE LIPPINCOT. Match me.

HAT. (*Lights the cigarette for him*) Watch out for the ashes.

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Glances scornfully about him*) Well, I see nothing here that need long detain the tourist. (*And moves to go out.*)

HAT. Wait a minute!

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Stops*) What for?

HAT. Where're you going?

THE LIPPINCOT. Out.

HAT. But where?

THE LIPPINCOT. Into the air again.

HAT. What's the matter with the air in here?

THE LIPPINCOT. It's full of it.

HAT. What?

THE LIPPINCOT. Tricks.—Quips and cranks and wanton wiles.—Take care, my boy.

HAT. (*Laughs and seats himself*) I love 'em!

THE LIPPINCOT. How any guy in his right senses can walk into a trap like this—a female seminary! (*HAT laughs and deposits his cigarette ash in the cuff of his trousers.*) —An absolute man-trap—

HAT. All I wish is, they'd spring it.

THE LIPPINCOT. —Herding a flock of women together in one place and *educating* them—think of it! —Teaching the young boas how to constrict.

HAT. You're cracked on the subject.

THE LIPPINCOT. —And I mean to stay cracked.

HAT. If you're so against the little dears, what brought you up?

THE LIPPINCOT. I was lied to.

HAT. Who by?

THE LIPPINCOT. That liar Thatcher.

HAT. How come?

THE LIPPINCOT. —Telling me he was driving over

to Philly in your old Ford—family farewells, and so forth.

HAT. Well, I saw him leave.

THE LIPPINCOT. Did you say goodbye to him?

HAT. I guess so.

THE LIPPINCOT. Well, you'll be saying "Hello" in a minute.

HAT. What makes you think he's headed this way?

THE LIPPINCOT. A wire came for him—ten minutes after he left.

HAT. —So you're a wire-tapper too.—Absolutely dishonest, absolutely contemptible—What did it say?

THE LIPPINCOT. "Expecting you hourly, gay, dancing fool that I am."

HAT. (*Grins*) —Signed "Alex."

THE LIPPINCOT. Signed "Alexandra Regina."

HAT. That doesn't mean he's coming. He told *me* Philadelphia, too. You've given yourself a nice long trip for nothing, Mr. L.

THE LIPPINCOT. I wish I thought so.

HAT. Sam'll never get in too deep. Don't worry about Sam.

THE LIPPINCOT. I'm taking no chances on him.

HAT. He's certainly got no idea of marrying anyone at this point.

THE LIPPINCOT. Someone just might put the idea in his head. They probably run special courses in fly-casting.

HAT. You don't know the girl. She's probably no more serious about it than he is. (THE LIPPINCOT *waggles at him.*) —The fact is, it's hard to get *her* serious about anything. (*And waggles again.*) Even if he should come, it'd probably be just for a nice "Goodbye" and "God bless you" before he starts off on the big trip with you.

THE LIPPINCOT. She doesn't even know he's going away yet. He hasn't had the nerve to tell her yet.

HAT. And how'd you find *that* out? (*Again LIP-*

PINCOT *waggles.*) —Some day you'll get waggler's cramp. Then what'll you do?

THE LIPPINCOT. Waggle out of it. (*Again HAT deposits his cigarette ash in the cuff of his trousers.*)

HAT. —The Lippincot scared of a woman: that's something to see, all right.

THE LIPPINCOT. Scared, your foot. Only no little ball of fluff is going to ball up my plans, I'll tell you that.

HAT. You've got them all wrong; it's been just another little spring affair, that's all. (*Again the ashes prepare to go into the cuff. THE LIPPINCOT sets his camera.*) —Though why all this special bunk about the spring I don't know. I feel good all the time. (*The ashes are deposited and the camera clicks. HAT looks up, startled*) What's that for?

THE LIPPINCOT. Photographic History—Subjugated Male—Genus Americanus.

(BUCK BUCHANAN and DOC BOYD enter from the hall. BOTH are in their very early twenties. BUCK is tall, slight, very urbane. Doc is stocky, of definite athletic build.)

BOYD. Hi, men!

BUCHANAN. What! No women?

HAT. They've all got Five O'clocks—unless one of you is for Mady Platt.

BOYD. What's the name?

HAT. Mady Platt. (BOYD looks questioningly to BUCHANAN.)

BUCHANAN. We shall see.

BOYD. We shall see.

BUCHANAN. Check in Buchanan and Boyd, will you? We've got to go and unpack. (*He scratches on the pad upon the desk.*)

HAT. Who?

BOYD. (*Indicates himself*) Boyd— (*And then BUCHANAN*) —and Buchanan.

HAT. But who for?

BUCHANAN. I'm Sally Prescott's; a special import, at great expense. See that she gets these few fervent words I'm leaving her. —Lovingly, Buck.

THE LIPPINCOT. Sweet.

HAT. (*To BOYD*) —And whose are you?

BOYD. No mark; waiting to be claimed.

THE LIPPINCOT. Just throw him to the wolves.

BOYD. Goodness gwacious—big stwong Yale boy!

THE LIPPINCOT. Run along, Sweet-tooth. Get back to your Jersey Country Club.

BUCHANAN. We'd better go, Doc. They might get rough with us.

BOYD. Let's see: what *was* that football score?

BUCHANAN. They're devils at chess, though. (*They go out up Left.*)

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Sniffs contemptuously*) There are two things I can always spot in a guy: jaundice and Princeton. (*The TELEPHONE rings.*)

HAT. Answer it: maybe it's Sam.

THE LIPPINCOT. I wouldn't touch it. (*But he seats himself again and waits. It rings again. A DOOR slams upstairs and MARY PLATT bounces down the stairs, whistling. She is a bright, attractive girl, the authorized comedian of the house. She glances at the recumbent forms of HAT and THE LIPPINCOT.*)

MARY. Please don't get up. (*Then picks up the telephone and speaks into it very sweet, very archly*) Hello? (*Disappointed that it is not for her*) Oh. —No, she's not here. I say Miss Sally Prescott is out of town. I don't know. Maybe tonight. The which operator? Williamstown? All right. I've got it. (*She replaces the telephone, scribbles on a pad and turns to HAT*) Hello, Bun.

HAT. Hi yuh, Bun.

THE LIPPINCOT. What is it—a bakery?

HAT. —Just a term of endearment.—This is The Lippincot, Mady. (*To THE LIPPINCOT*) —Miss Mady Platt, of Platt's Corners.

THE LIPPINCOT. How do you do?

MADY. How do you *dee*?

THE LIPPINCOT. (*In complete disgust*) My God!

HAT. Where's my little Frances?

MADY. She'll be along. (*To THE LIPPINCOT*)
—You're here for the dance tomorrow too, are you?

THE LIPPINCOT. What I am here for is no dance.

MADY. I beg your pardon?

THE LIPPINCOT. I said, what I am here for is *no* dance.

MADY. Pretty cryptic fellow, isn't he?

HAT. Deep.

MADY. I know the type. But who is he?

HAT. Sam's roommate.

MADY. Is Sam Thatcher really coming up? Alex has been hanging by her teeth for a week.

HAT. I didn't think so—but he's said to be on the way now in my Ford.

MADY. Oh, that would be wonderful!

HAT. I'll miss that old boat of mine.

THE LIPPINCOT. You made plenty out of the raffle.

HAT. I need plenty, the way I live.

MADY. —Wonderful, wonderful.

HAT. What's wonderful about it?

MADY. We've got bets on. He's Alex's first heavy beau. Usually she makes them feel so foolish, they run for their lives. But apparently Thatcher can take it. Look: just what kind of an egg is the egg?

HAT. Sam? Oh, he's got some funny ideas, but he'll get by. He'll get by fine.

MADY. Well, he'd better be sweet to our Alex.

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Rising*) Or else what? (*To HAT*)
I'm going to pick up a drink. I'll be back.

HAT. Shall I tell him you're in town?

THE LIPPINCOT. No.

HAT. Why not?

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Waggles*) Secrets. (*And goes out up Left, nearly colliding with FRANCES FENN in the doorway*) Look where you're going, tow-head!

FRANCES. (*Enters, looking back over her shoulder at him. She is somewhat on the dumb side, and is considered so by the other girls. She is, however, extremely pretty, childlike and good-natured.*) Well, of all the rude—! Hat! Hello, Hat.

HAT. Hello, Frances.

FRANCES. I—I'm awfully glad you could come.

HAT. Rejoice, all ye maidens! Once more Hat is among you! (*He takes her chin in his hand*) Such a pretty little face. So frank. So open. (*He bends to kiss her. She laughs embarrassedly and pushes his hand away.*) —Always rebuffs—nothing but rebuffs.

MADY. (*Rises*) I leave you to your own devices. Only look out for Miss Ritchie— (*She mounts the stairs.*) She hath the House-mother's eagle eye that pierceth any thicket. (*And goes out. Again FRANCES laughs.*)

FRANCES. Mady's awful. She's really awful.—I hope you brought your dancing legs.

HAT. They're right here under me. A drop or two of oil, and they will do great things.

FRANCES. Wait till you see the Inn: all flowers and Japanese lanterns.

HAT. Is that where the murder takes place?

FRANCES. (*Nodding*) —Dinner here first— And we've got an orchestra from Amherst. Fun?

HAT. I didn't know they could play.

FRANCES. You mustn't mind if strange girls cut in on you. Introductions are more or less off.

HAT. I'll wear a clean shirt and keep flexing my biceps: us Yale men, who can resist us?

FRANCES. Bun.—How many are coming up?

HAT. Well, there's me and Whit Reed—but I

guess he's for Grosvenor House—and maybe Sam Thatcher—and I guess—

FRANCES. Is *he* really coming?

HAT. Sam? I don't know for certain, but—

(ALEX BENSON *has come in up Left from the hall, to hear this. ALEX is not particularly pretty, but she is intense, vital, attractive. She puts down her books and makes directly for HAT.*)

ALEX. Hat!—But you do think there's a chance!

HAT. (*Turns*) Why, it's Alexandra herself! I bend the knee, Queen.

ALEX. How did you know about that?

HAT. My scouts are everywhere.

ALEX. You really think he may?

HAT. My scouts think so.

ALEX. Today?

HAT. Even so.

ALEX. Golly. What train?

HAT. No train: my old Ford. He left before I did.

ALEX. Golly.

FRANCES. Isn't it exciting?

ALEX. —But if he is, where is he?

HAT. Probably across the street at the Inn, waiting for you.

ALEX. Please go see!

HAT. What are telephones for, little girl?

ALEX. I don't like them; I was frightened by one as a baby.—Go on, Hat—fetch him over.

HAT. You know he won't put a nose in this house. You'll have to go there.

ALEX. (*Shakes her head firmly*) Not this time. Not anymore ever.

HAT. How come?

ALEX. I'll do no more dodging up back alleys to meet him. I'm taking a stand. I'm assuming a dignity.

HAT. A fat lot of good it will do you.

ALEX. We shall see what we shall see. Tell him I await him here. (*She propels him toward the door up Left.*) Do this for Yale, Hat. Bring him back alive.

HAT. I'll deliver your message, lady. That's as far as I can go.—I'll wash up and then collect you for dinner, Fran. Be ever fond and true. (*He goes out up Left.*)

ALEX. (*Reflects*) The trouble with taking a stand is the distance you can fall.

FRANCES. Alex—can I borrow your curling-iron?

ALEX. Take it, child, and may it bring you peace.

(*FRANCES runs up the stairs as KATE McKIM enters from the hall. She is like a big sister to ALEX; likeable, serious, calm and judicious.*)

FRANCES. (*On the stairs*) I'm getting into a tizzy about Hat. I don't know why. (*She goes out.*)

KATE. (*Gazes after her*) The atmosphere of this House is beginning to get me down.

ALEX. Bun, I think maybe he's coming.

KATE. Who?

ALEX. Sam.

KATE. So!

ALEX. So.

KATE. So the oaf has finally condescended to appear at a dance, has he?

ALEX. I think he has.

KATE. A major triumph, to say the least.

ALEX. Is it not?

KATE. At times I could wish you'd never met up with that eggplant.

ALEX. Unkind! Unmately! He is my current problem. We must face our problems squarely, must we not?

KATE. Only you've got another a trifle more urgent.

ALEX. Such as?

KATE. Well, what happens to your research job in New York if you don't finish it in time?

ALEX. Finish what?

KATE. Your brain-child—your biology thesis!

ALEX. Oh—my thesis—

KATE. Have you thought of that by any chance?

ALEX. I have thought.

KATE. —And the little flat in Stuyvesant Square, with the cast-iron sink and the china Lu—all our plans—all the fun we were going to have.

ALEX. We'll have it, Katie. We'll keep three or four worlds in the air at once.

KATE. But seriously, Bun, it's due Monday, isn't it?

ALEX. It was.

KATE. How you you mean "was"?

ALEX. I wrote a sweet little note to dear Professor Beckett.

KATE. You'll get a sweeter one back, saying "No Soap."

ALEX. But he so likes to do the unexpected!

KATE. I wouldn't count on it.

ALEX. Maybe I should have got you to write for me.

KATE. Why me?

ALEX. You know he's smit with you. I can tell by the way he barks at you in class.

KATE. He barks at everyone.

ALEX. But there's a special note in his voice for you. It's more like a bay.

KATE. I'll listen for it.

MADY. (*At the top of the stairs*) Did I hear the lyric cry, the tuneful note? Mates!

ALEX. Mate!

MADY. (*Crouches and glares through the banisters*) I am horrore. I am going slowly but surely mad with

education. (*She comes down the stairs, her hair tousled.*)

KATE. I tell you I'm the one sane woman in the place.

FRANCES. (*Appears on the stairs, a curling-iron to her hair*) I wish I could get it to curl up in back like a duck's behind. I do think they're sweet, don't you?

KATE. I'm getting worried about Sally. Why isn't she back?

MADY. (*Recumbent along the top of the sofa*) She'll come. Nerves tied into bow-knots, but come will our Sal.

FRANCES. (*At the mirror*) Hat says the funniest things. He keeps me in stitches.

MADY. (*Pointing her finger*) Alex's got a beau-au, Alex's got a beau-au!

ALEX. To think—I may eat a great juicy dinner off Sam tonight. Juicy thick lamb chops. I shall fall on my food with great cries, for I am desolate and sick of an old sandwich.

KATE. You're a coward to eat out so often, Alex.

MADY. Think of us here with the old grey meat.

FRANCES. I wonder where the cook gets it.

MADY. Don't you know? They make contracts with circuses for all the old animals.

KATE. Old tired meat that has jumped through many hoops.

ALEX. (*Stretches luxuriously*) How pleasant, how pleasant it is to dwell with mate!

KATE. Commencement June sixteenth—three weeks—less than three.

ALEX. It's all been so very damned lovely, I can't bear to think of it being ever over.

FRANCES. When I think of being left here without you, I could cry.

MADY. No tears, faithful mates. Let's make the most of our woman's world while we have it.

KATE. For Youth is fast a-fleeting.

MADY. Think of us all old. *I'm* going to be in an Old Ladies' Home, religious and drunk. I can hardly wait. After graduation I'm going to collect three hundred dollars and a black silk dress. Then I can retire any time. (*To ALEX*) —But why the long face, Bun? Why the drooping jowls?

ALEX. Shh! I'm playing a little game with myself. It's called "Will he—Won't he?"

MADY. Who-ee?

ALEX. Sammy.

MADY. I'll give you five to one.

ALEX. That he will come, or he won't?

MADY. Either way. (*ALEX gestures.*)

FRANCES. You know, he sort of frightens me. He's so sort of standoffish.

ALEX. The Spirit of Pomp and Circumstance is what he is.

KATE. *I* think you think more of him than you think you do.

ALEX. Do you?

KATE. —And you'd better look out. No one's entirely immune, you know.

FRANCES. To what?

MADY. Love, darling.

FRANCES. Sometimes I don't know *what* to think about love.

KATE. It's a simple physical condition: first the fever, then the rash.

FRANCES. Imagine Alex in real love!

ALEX. Catch me! I'd run a mile.—Sam's safe; he hates anything even remotely romantic. The trouble is, he even thinks dances are such.

KATE. He doesn't know how grim they can be.

MADY. If he does come, I suppose we won't see you for days, again.

ALEX. Yes, you will. I've changed my type. This time I'm going to mind all the observances—and make him do likewise. That's part of the game.

KATE. You couldn't be serious about a man like that, Alex.

ALEX. Who intends being? *I* don't expect to be serious about any man till I'm well along in the middle fifties.—I *would* like to make the team, though. Why doesn't he just ask me? Nobody's ever made even an indecent proposal to me.

MADY. You scare them, Bun.

ALEX. Would you have me turn into the Little Woman?—Even that wouldn't work with Sam.

FRANCES. How do you know?

ALEX. He has his convictions; he delivers enormous orations against marriage.

KATE. So you've discussed it, have you?

ALEX. Fervently, briskly.

KATE. Arrive anywhere?

ALEX. At the conclusion: to Man, Woman is an impediment.

MADY. Since when, for Pete's sake?

ALEX. The Beginning. Fire flashes from his eyes when he speaks of it.

KATE. They're so ridiculous, all of them.

MADY. It seems to me the Little Fellows are growing a trifle hard to handle.

KATE. (*In high indignation*) Men! Who do they think they are—women?

ALEX. —But you know, he really is sort of noble and dramatic. He suffers much. I try to be doe-faced, but once in a while the laugh will roll out.

KATE. Give a big one for me some time.

FRANCES. They don't like that, do they?

MADY. They don't know what they like. (*She glances at herself in the mirror.*) My hair looks like a hoorah's nest. (*She moves toward the stairs.*) Come on, Franny-child. Let's go hanny-walk. (*They mount the stairs together.*) I do wish I'd asked someone, now. Do you want to go shares on Hat?

FRANCES. Oh, Mady—I couldn't!

MADY. Just a small percentage? I could make it worth your while.

FRANCES. Mady! *(They go out.)*

ALEX. —He drives like a madman. Suppose he's had an accident on the road somewhere?

KATE. Imagine caring.

ALEX. —On a lonely country road, with no one to find him. Suppose he's just lying there, torn and bleeding.

KATE. It would do him good.

ALEX. *(Looks at herself in her mirror)* I do look like an old horse with a fly up its nose.—Yes, I ought to put soap on my eyebrows. Sam wanted to know what made them so stiff, and I said worry. *(Ecstatically)* Ci wah pitty cute!

KATE. Ci wah any damn fool.

ALEX. What's going to happen to us, do you think?

KATE. How do you mean, Bun?

ALEX. To Sam and me. We get too far too fast. Something has to happen. *(The screen door in the hall is heard to close.)*

KATE. You be careful, Bun.

ALEX. I guess maybe I flatter myself.

KATE. Just the same, you be careful.

(WALTER BECKETT enters from the hall. He is about thirty-five, spare, brisk, assured. Both GIRLS rise instantly.)

ALEX and KATE. *(Together)* Good evening, Mr. Beckett.

BECKETT. *(Raises his hand as if there was a baton in it)* Once more now—all together!

ALEX and KATE. I beg your pardon?

BECKETT. At least your chorus work is good.—You sent me a note, Miss Benson.

ALEX. Yes, Mr. Beckett.

BECKETT. A most touching little note. I was pass-

ing by and thought I might answer it personally. The answer is I'm afraid there's nothing I can do about it.

ALEX. I—I'm sorry, Mr. Beckett.

BECKETT. So am I. I had hopes for that thesis.

ALEX. (*Swallows*) I had too. Can't I have just till Thursday?

BECKETT. Monday is the due-date.

ALEX. Please, Mr. Beckett, can I have until Thursday?

BECKETT. I regret more than I can possibly tell you—

ALEX. Just till Thursday, Mr. Beckett. Just till six o'clock Thursday?

BECKETT. Unfortunately, I—

ALEX. —Five o'clock?

KATE. Oh, for heaven's sake let it go, Alex.

BECKETT. Ah! And now we hear from Miss McKim!

KATE. She's worked for the better part of a year on that child of hers, and I do think—

BECKETT. On that what of hers?

KATE. Child: it's what she calls it. (*ALEX wriggles affectedly. BECKETT smiles.*)

BECKETT. Dear, dear! And that, I suppose, makes me a father.

KATE. Yes, in a way.

BECKETT. But what wonderful news! Fatherhood—what a privilege! Of course in *that* case—

ALEX. Oh, thank you, Mr. Beckett!

KATE. As a matter of fact, I'm by way of knitting a little sweater for it.

BECKETT. Be sure it's a warm one, won't you?

KATE. Oh, yes!

BECKETT. (*To ALEX*) —Then I shall expect to hear the patter of tiny feet no later than Thursday at five—understood?

ALEX. Perfectly, Mr. Beckett. My heart is full of understanding and gratitude.

KATE. May I offer congratulations to both?

BECKETT. (*Suddenly barking*) You may all of you offer me some decent work for a change!

ALEX. That isn't fair, Mr. Beckett. We work awfully hard, really we do.

BECKETT. I suppose at times even the greatest minds will wander.

ALEX. (*Stoutly*) I'm certainly certain *my* mind's on my work. I'm certain all of our minds in this house are.

KATE. (*With gentle dignity*) That's perfectly true. I think you'd look a long time before you'd find a group of more seriously-minded students.

BECKETT. Don't wear yourselves out, my dears.

ALEX. This isn't Smith, you know—or Vassar—or— (*The outside door is flung open with a bang.*) Golly! Who's that? (*And SALLY PRESCOTT rushes in wildly, carrying a suitcase and a hat box. She is the prom-trotter, dramatic and self-centered, dashing, loud and attractively vulgar. She does not notice BECKETT.*)

SALLY. My God, feel my heart!

KATE. Sally, this is—

SALLY. Feel my heart! Wait till I tell you. A man followed me from the station, see, in the same *taxi!* (*Gasping*) Oh, my dear, I'm so dead I could die. My dear, I am a thousand wrecks. I'm absolutely—

ALEX. Sally, have you met Mr.—

BECKETT. Oh, don't interrupt her. Let her run on. (*SALLY blinks at him.*)

KATE. You are to call the Williamstown operator.

ALEX. Here are two letters for you—and a note.

SALLY. (*Snatches them*) New Haven, my God, and Dartmouth! (*She reads the note.*) Oh, my God—Buck Buchanan's coming to the dance. He's here already. Oh, I'm sick. I just asked him. I didn't want

him to *come*. (*She tears the letter open.*) Wait till I tell you!—It was so awful on the way down to New York. I had already got my ticket and berth so when I got on the train I found myself sort of immaculated in the middle of a whole car full of the whole Dartmouth Glee Club, think of it, and we asked the porter if it would be perfectly all right for us to sit in the berth and talk, and he said “Lady, dat am your berth. You paid for dat berth and you can do anything you want to with it.” (*She pauses for breath.*)

BECKETT. —The Higher Education.

SALLY. Is that a crack? (*Again to ALEX and KATE*) —And we sat there and talked on and on and were very quiet and every once in awhile one of those perfectly ghastly men would sort of call out “Lady, dat am your berth” and you can imagine—

KATE. Listen, Sally, this is Mr.—

SALLY. Don’t tell me! I remember him perfectly. Where was it?—Are you here for the dance?

BECKETT. Would you like me to be?

SALLY. I’d be enchantée. I love older men. I mean to say—

BECKETT. It sounds most inviting. It’s always a pleasure to grapple with another serious mind.

SALLY. But who actually *are* you?

BECKETT. (*To KATE*) Shall I tell her?

KATE. Why—why, yes—I think you might.

BECKETT. You think it would be kinder?

KATE. (*Uncertainly*) P-possibly.

BECKETT. (*Turns to SALLY*) Lieutenant Beckett, of the Vice Squad.

SALLY. (*Stares*) Of the what?

BECKETT. (*Confronts her, points his finger and barks*) —And the man who followed you from the station was one of *my* men!

SALLY. What on earth is he talking about? !

BECKETT. We’ve been watching you for a year—and let me tell you, Miss, unless you mend your

ways soon, your case comes before the Juvenile Delinquency Board. A warning's a warning. Good afternoon! (*He strides toward the hall up Left and out.*) SALLY stares after him. KATE and ALEX laugh.)

SALLY. It's some grim hoax. Who is he *really*?

ALEX. My Biology Prof.—Mr. Beckett.

SALLY. But why didn't you *tell* me?

KATE. We tried to, Precious.

SALLY. Well, of all the— What kind of a way is that for a—? (*She gathers up her bags again.*) I knew I'd seen him some place.

ALEX. Look, Sally: won't you please sell me that organdy dress for the dance?

SALLY. I tell you I paid too much for it. (*She rushes up the stairs.*) My God, I haven't slept in three nights!

ALEX. —But you never wear it!

SALLY. I tell you it is *not* for sale! Some things are sacred! (*She goes out as HAT and SAM THATCHER enter from the hall. SAM is tall, good-looking, very serious and self-composed.*)

SAM. (*To ALEX.*) Hello.

ALEX. (*So pleased*) Hellee.

SAM. Nice seeing you, Alex.

ALEX. The same to you, Sam. (*To KATE*) See? I win.

SAM. Hello, Kate.—You know Hat here, of course.

KATE. How in the world do you do, Mr. Hatton?

HAT. (*Very significantly*) Hello.

KATE. La! He hath the evil eye.

HAT. That's just my personality exerting itself. Where's my girl Frances? Tell her I'm back, will you?

KATE. I'll warn her you're back. (*She goes out, up the stairs, calling:*) Fran? Frances!

FRANCES' VOICE. (*From above*) Here I come!

ALEX. (*To SAM*) Did you get my telegram?

SAM. Telegram? No. It must have arrived after I left.

ALEX. I couldn't tell from yours whether to expect you or not. All it said was "Hold everything."

SAM. I wasn't sure till the last minute that I could make it.

ALEX. But you did.

SAM. But I did.—It was a kind of a rough trip; I blew a tire north of South Norwalk.

ALEX. That ought to about equal Norwalk.

SAM. Mademoiselle is pleased to jest.

ALEX. Mademoiselle is getting hungry. Mademoiselle could eat a horse.

FRANCES. (*Comes downstairs in a hat and high heels*) Is this hat becoming? I didn't know whether to wear it, or— (*She sees SAM*) Oh— (*Then:*) Oh, good evening, Mr. Thatcher.

SAM. How do you do?

HAT. (*Takes FRANCES' arm through his*) Permit me, pretty creature— (*To SAM*) See you at dinner at the Inn?

SAM. I doubt it.

HAT. Well, we'll be seeing you! Be ever fond and true. (*They move toward the hall.*) —Are my attentions welcome, Miss F.? Or shall we just be pals?

FRANCES. Hat, you kill me. (*They go out up Left.*)

ALEX. (*Gazes admiringly at SAM*) Big—old—thing—

SAM. You look fine, Alex.

ALEX. So do you, if I do say it.

SAM. I got wanting to see you.

ALEX. Kiss me once very quickly. (*He does so.*) Thank you very much.

SAM. Thank you.

ALEX. (*Sighs*) I guess I've got to face the fact that I'll have the handsomest man at the dance.

SAM. I'm terribly sorry, but I won't be able to make it, Alex.

ALEX. But you *have* made it!

SAM. No. I've got to pull out at the latest by three tomorrow.

ALEX. By—! You mean to say you're not going to stay for it?

SAM. I won't be able to.

ALEX. But, Sam—

SAM. I'm awfully sorry. It just can't be helped.

ALEX. (*Looks away*) That's too bad. It was to have been a lovely dance.

SAM. We'll have this evening.

ALEX. For these few crumbs, much thanks.

SAM. Don't do that, Alex.

ALEX. All right, Sam.

SAM. I've got all kinds of things to tell you.

ALEX. Will I like them?

SAM. I don't know.

ALEX. Tell me the ones I will, first. Be the iron hand in the velvet glove.

SAM. I've missed you terribly this last week.

ALEX. I've missed you and everything else I've aimed at.

SAM. There's something particularly important that I—anyhow, I just thought I'd run up and—Where shall we eat?

ALEX. Where do you want to?

SAM. Any place but the Inn.

ALEX. There isn't much choice. Miss Thompson's?

SAM. I don't like fudge-cake. I feel more like a steak.

ALEX. You look more like a steak, dear.

SAM. There's a little place on the Deerfield road Mutt Jacobi told me about.

ALEX. La, it's miles.

SAM. It's a sweet night out.

ALEX. —And of evil repute.

SAM. All the better. No friendly leers.

ALEX. I can't possibly. I've got to work. (*She re-*

flects a moment, then turns to the stairs.) I'll get my hat and coat. *(She meets SALLY on the stairs, singing as she comes down.)* That note is flat.

SALLY. Flat? It's concave! Look: if Miss Ritchie asks for me, I'm going out for some aspirin and I may not be back. *(She sees SAM and stops.)* Well! *This is something!*

ALEX. *(Over the stair railing)* I don't think you've met. Sam Thatcher—Sally Prescott. Speak to the nice gentleman, dear. *(She goes out. SALLY claps on her glasses again.)*

SAM. How do you do?

SALLY. How do you *dee*? *(She calls after ALEX)* My dear, he's superb! *(Then removes the glasses, turns and eyes SAM appraisingly)* Tell me, what mad fate has kept us apart?

SAM. *(Moves away from her)* I'm sure I don't know.

SALLY. Prepare yourself against the morrow. I'll be that girl who cuts in on you all the time.

SAM. I'm afraid I won't be here for the dance.

SALLY. *I'm only afraid you will!*

THE LIPPINCOT. *(Comes in very casually from the hall)* This town is crawling with women.

SAM. *(Turns in astonishment)* Well, for—! What in the devil are you doing up here?

THE LIPPINCOT. I just came to deliver a telegram.

SAM. You don't mind if I read it?

THE LIPPINCOT. Not at all. *(SAM reads the telegram.)* How's Philadelphia? How's all the folks?

SAM. *(Thrusts the telegram into his pocket)* Listen: when I want a nurse around—

THE LIPPINCOT. Is this the young lady in question?

SAM. No, it's not.

SALLY. Young, but no lady.

THE LIPPINCOT. That's how I like them. *(To SAM, his eyes still on SALLY)* —Then get her, and let's go eat.

SAM. I'm afraid my plans for dinner don't include you.

THE LIPPINCOT. That's too bad. I don't like eating alone. (*To SALLY*) How about it, Big-Eyes?

SALLY. About what?

THE LIPPINCOTT. I've told the cook at the Inn how to make a chicken-casserole that would break your heart. Do you like noodles?

SALLY. No, I can't say I do.

THE LIPPINCOT. You'll like these noodles. (*He jerks his thumb toward the hall door.*) The first table near the window. Go over and wait for me.

SALLY. I'll do no such thing! (*The TELEPHONE rings. She goes to answer it, still watching THE LIPPINCOT rather fearfully.*) Hello? Yes? Who? Wait a minute—

THE LIPPINCOT. (*To SAM*) You're certainly a fellow to take chances, all right.

SALLY. (*Goes to the bottom of the stairs and calls*) Mady! Mady Platt! Telephone!

SAM. Listen: can't a guy drive up to say goodbye to a friend without being hounded like this?

THE LIPPINCOT. Ever think of trying Niagara Falls in a barrel?

SALLY. (*Returning*) I never heard of such a man!

THE LIPPINCOT. You wouldn't be likely to, dear. (*To SAM*) What do you want me to do—wait for you in the car?—Is it going to take long?

SAM. What?

THE LIPPINCOT. The big farewells. Haven't you told her yet?

SAM. Listen, you buzzard. I'll do this in my own way, and my own good time. You can't just simply go up to a person and—

MADY. (*Comes running down the stairs*) Howdy, white folks. (*Goes to telephone; speaks*) Hello? Pink! Yes, Pink, of course! (*She wriggles affectedly.*) Well—if a girl should get asked, you know—

SALLY. (*To THE LIPPINCOT*) It's certainly a new line on me.

THE LIPPINCOT. There is no extra charge. Go on—get going.

SALLY. But I don't even know your name, even!

MADY. (*Simultaneously*) Yes, yes—no!

THE LIPPINCOT. It's very simple; composed of three little words: a lip, a pin and a cot. Get it? (*SALLY stares. He waggles at her.*)

MADY. (*Rapidly*) You don't mean it! Will I? !—Yes. Yes. Je comprends. (*She replaces the telephone and turns breathlessly to SALLY*) —Doc Boyd—Pink Boyd's brother—he's come up unexpectedly. They're dining across the street. He *asked* for me! Whee! I've got a man by the tail!—Tell Miss Ritchie, will you? (*She rushes toward the hall.*)

SALLY. But your hat, Mady!

MADY. (*Over her shoulder as she goes out*) When I've just had a ten-dollar wave? Don't be *cray*!

SALLY. (*To THE LIPPINCOT*) —“Lip-pin-cot”—revolting! (*Then*) Near the window, you said?

THE LIPPINCOT. First stall to the left. Tuck your bib in your neck.

SALLY. Oh! You're so awful, I have to find out more about you. (*To SAM*) Tell Alex to tell Miss Ritchie, will you?—And if a Princeton man named Buchanan turns up, I didn't *dream* of him till tomorrow, and I had a *rigid* dinner-date, with noodles!

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Turns as she goes out and regards SAM with compassion*) Poor old Thatcher; I can see him now.

SAM. What do you mean “Poor old—”?

THE LIPPINCOT. He was quite a guy before the little bug bit him.

SAM. (*Turns away*) Oh—you and your little bugs.

THE LIPPINCOT. —And got him up in the middle of the night, writing letters—

SAM. See my secretary.

THE LIPPINCOT. —And sending flowers and books and calling long-distance and running up for week-ends and coming back full of tea and cakes and forget-me-nots.

SAM. Look: once you do open your trap, does it never close?

THE LIPPINCOT. The guy who wasn't going to get caught, no, sir! The guy who was always going to be his own man!

SAM. —And still is!

THE LIPPINCOT. Maybe.

SAM. Watch him.

THE LIPPINCOT. It'd be a treat, all right—a real treat.

SAM. Look: there's an eight-fifteen back. I hear it calling you. (THE LIPPINCOT *waggles at him.*) Why not? What's there here for you? (*And waggles again.*) Oh, for cat's sake make sense.

THE LIPPINCOT. Do you remember my father—aged fifty-four, and a widower?

SAM. What about him?

THE LIPPINCOT. They got him; they sent him to the cleaners a week ago.

SAM. Who did?

THE LIPPINCOT. —A forty-year old fandango with buck teeth—I've seen her—and the size of a moose. *He* was quite a guy, too.

SAM. Well, it's his business, isn't it?

THE LIPPINCOT. It would never have happened if I'd been around, I can tell you that.

SAM. Lip, the Boy Bodyguard!

THE LIPPINCOT. You think I'm going to let you throw the chance of a lifetime away just because some little dame's taken a fancy to you?

SAM. I'm not the romantic type—so you needn't worry.

THE LIPPINCOT. No? Why not? You don't know how they work. When they're stalking their prey

they never sleep, even. (*He adds, significantly.*) That is, unless they *have* to.

SAM. And you can lay off *that*. Understand.

THE LIPPINCOT. What! Shall idle talk mar her dainty radiance? ! (*He turns away.*) Good Lord, you're in even worse shape than I thought. (*Suddenly SAM turns him about again and confronts him.*)

SAM. Look: when's our date for?

THE LIPPINCOT. I hardly know, it's been postponed so often,

SAM. When's it for?

THE LIPPINCOT. The idea was to start out at five A.M. Sunday.

SAM. From where?

THE LIPPINCOT. New Haven, I thought.

SAM. (*Gives him a shove*) Then for sweet Pete's sake, get there and stay there!

THE LIPPINCOT. I'll drive back with you any time you say.

SAM. I'm going tomorrow. But why *you* should hang around until then—

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Waggles*) I'll check with you at the Inn later on. (*He moves toward the hall.*)

SAM. No! Don't wait up for me.

THE LIPPINCOT. No trouble. (*He sees ALEX coming slowly down the stairs, carrying her coat and hat. He looks at her and exclaims softly.*) My God. All this delay for *this*?

SAM. (*Savagely*) Yes! What about it?

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Going out up Left*) "De gustibus," as they say, "non disputandum est."

ALEX. Who was the foreign element?

SAM. (*Waits a moment, then replies shortly*) The Lippincot—a friend of mine.

ALEX. He hath a lean and hungry look.

SAM. He's—he's quite an unusual guy. We're—er—we're going on a trip together.

ALEX. That sounds fun. When and where?

SAM. Right away—Sunday. We've—we've been planning it for quite a while.

ALEX. How can you get away at this time of year?

SAM. I'm thinking of quitting college, Alex.

ALEX. How do you mean? Quitting when?

SAM. Yesterday afternoon.

ALEX. (*Drops her hat and coat upon a chair*) Thatcher, you're mad. It's only three weeks till—

SAM. Why should I trick myself out in a black nightshirt and cardboard hat to get a piece of fake parchment telling me I'm a Bachelor of Arts, for cat's sake?

ALEX. Well, I don't just know, Sam.

SAM. I went to college to please my father, but I certainly can't go so far as to accept a meaningless degree from it.

ALEX. A matter of principle, is it?

SAM. Plus the fact that a brilliant guy like The Lippincot won't get his.

ALEX. The Lippincot, he no work, maybe.

SAM. He works with his camera.

ALEX. His what?

SAM. He takes pictures.

ALEX. Well, you can't run a whole university around a camera.

SAM. In a civilized country you could. (*A moment. Then, significantly*) In—er—in Russia you could.

ALEX. The Russians are a wonderful little people.

SAM. You bet they are!

ALEX. I guess I just don't know them very well.

SAM. You ought to—everyone ought to. Something new is happening in the world, Alex—something that hasn't anything to do with college degrees or making good on Wall Street or marrying the boss's daughter or any of the rest of the old romantic bunkum. The little home in the suburbs and the eight-four Commuters' Special and the Racquet Club—they're all on the skids.

ALEX. I'd like to see the Racquet Club when it really gets to sliding.

SAM. I'm not kidding, Alex.

ALEX. I know you're not, Sam, and I think you're fine, Sam.

SAM. All I know is, when the New Era comes, I want to be part of it.

ALEX. My mother had a bicycle once called the "New Era."

SAM. What's the point of that?

ALEX. Nothing. It just popped into mind.

SAM. What I mean is, I want to be *equipped* to be part of it; to lead in it. *I'm* certainly not going to make the same old mistakes.

ALEX. Don't you do it.

SAM. A fellow's got to be free.

ALEX. You bet. And white. And twenty-one.

SAM. God! I'll be twenty-three in November. Can you believe it?

ALEX. You don't look it; you really don't.

SAM. Sometimes I feel even older. When I think of the time I've wasted! Except for the Ford I won in the raffle and Philosophy Three under Slugger Bill Patterson and the six hundred bucks I saved from what I made as business-manager of *The News*, the last four years represent a complete and absolute waste.

ALEX. I know, it's awful. Have you actually got that much?

SAM. I've got more. I sold my furniture for seventy-nine fifty cash—and a couple of post-dated checks that may be good.

ALEX. But—but about leaving college—don't you think you ought to be a little more patient?

SAM. I don't believe in patience. I think patience is a form of sloth.

ALEX. You're so wonderfully uncompromising, Sam.

KATE. (*Comes down the stairs*) La! You two still here?

ALEX. We get to talking.

KATE. I'm going out. I can't face the groaning board alone with dear house-mother. (*A brief pause.*)

ALEX. Come with us?

SAM. Yes, why don't you?

KATE. All right, I will. (*A brief silence. She laughs.*) Don't worry!—I'm going to horn in at Grosvenor House. They have fresh fish on Fridays. Tell Miss Ritchie, will you? And you get in early, you hear, Bun?

ALEX. Yes, Bun.

KATE. I had to promise her that any of us out to-night would surely be in before ten. She'll be around to check up, so look out.

ALEX. I will, Bun.

KATE. Good night, Thatch-patch. Be good to my little girl.

SAM. (*Pleased*) Is that what they call me around here?

ALEX. No, but they probably will from now on.

SAM. Well, we might shove along ourselves, I guess.

ALEX. Yes, I guess. (*She leans back against the sofa, reflectively.*) I'm a little sick about the dance, Sam.

SAM. I'm sorry. But we have to pick up our stuff in New Haven and start out at five Sunday morning. It was to have been today, but I put it off—just—just so I could see you again before we left.

ALEX. Just where is it you're headed for?

SAM. Seattle, first.

ALEX. Seattle!

SAM. Yes. We've got a swell arrangement. I furnish the car and The Lippincot buys the oil and gas and pays five-eighths of our grub bill. He eats more

than I do anyway and he's got quite a lot of dough, and—which reminds me, what about tires? We never settled that. Suppose we have bad luck and need new rubber all around? (*He ponders this.*)

ALEX. How long do you figure to Seattle?

SAM. About five weeks, the way we plan it. He'll want to stop all the time to take pictures.

ALEX. I'll probably be somewhere in New York with Katie when you get back.

SAM. (*After a moment*) That will be quite a while, Alex.

ALEX. (*Glances at him quickly*) But I thought you said—five weeks—

SAM. In Seattle we sell the Ford. Then we begin on the Big Push to Russia. Of course we'll stop over in China long enough to get the real dope on the Manchukuo situation. That's where the lid's going to blow off, when she blows. (*His enthusiasm grows*) Then into Russia from the hind end, not the tourist end. We're going to steer clear of Moscow. We want to see the Crimea—Baku—Kiev—Nijni Novgorod—Archangel—the whole show! I think I can learn a lot. Then, after a couple of years or so—

ALEX. *Years?!*

SAM. Sure! It takes time, you know— Quite a piece out of a life, of course, but—

ALEX. Yes, it is. Yes, it's quite a piece.

SAM. —But only one of 'em to live, you know!

ALEX. That's it. So make it a good one.

SAM. That's it.

ALEX. It sounds grand, the whole thing. (*A moment, then*) —A girl couldn't go along, I suppose? You know—in some very minor capacity?

SAM. It's not just a pleasure trip. I'm going to have to earn my way, Alex—

ALEX. But look at *me*. I'm just as well fitted out to as you are; a test-tube's a test-tube the world over,

isn't it?—And I'll bet you the Russian germs are the same as ours, under their beards.

SAM. No woman could stand the way we intend doing it.

ALEX. This world for men only, I see. (*Her hand falls upon his arm.*) La, you're a fine, braw lad. You're the Spirit of Rough Tweeds and The Open Road and Three Squares a Day and A Place to Flop. More power to you, Sammy.

SAM. Kidding aside. I guess I'm just not the kind to settle down anywhere for long. I guess I'm more or less of a rover at heart. (*ALEX suppresses a laugh. He glances at her.*) You've—I've always made that clear to you, haven't I, Alex?

ALEX. Yes, Sam. We are just friends, now and always and how are you and where have you been and you look simply splendid in your new Crusader's Suit and I'll wear a Quaker bonnet to remind me of the friends we are.

SAM. You'd look pretty sweet in one, at that!

ALEX. Thank thee. So what you really came up for was to tell me goodbye.

SAM. (*After a moment*) Yes, Alex.

ALEX. Well, that's something. I do appreciate that. (*She turns and puts on her hat before the mirror.*) It's lucky it's been nothing more than—just very friendly, isn't it?

SAM. I guess it is, in a way.—But I want to tell you something else: I just want you to know, Alex, that as this period of my life ends, you're the—you're the most important woman that has—that's ever been in it. (*WARN Curtain.*)

ALEX. Thank you. I shall ever try to be worthy of the distinction. (*Suddenly her laugh escapes her, and once out is difficult to control. She shakes with it, murmuring through it.*) Oh, la—la—la!

SAM. (*Aggrieved dignity*) I'm sorry. I was quite serious.

ALEX. Don't mind me. Please don't. Sometimes—sometimes even serious things strike me funny. There! (*She wipes her eyes.*) The fact is, all at once I've got the queerest, strangest, hollow feeling. I—Sam—I— (*In the hall, the DINNER-GONG sounds. It saves her.*) There's the dinner-gong. It must be hunger. Let's go eat.

SAM. (*Takes her shoulders in his hands and looks at her*) One for good appetite? (*She nods solemnly. He kisses her.*)

ALEX. It was a darling one.

SAM. Darling, they all are.

ALEX. We're getting close to the end of them, aren't we?

SAM. Bun.

ALEX. Bun. (*They gaze at each other for a long instant. Then:*)

SAM. (*Roughly*) Come on! Why do we stand here all the day idle? (*He takes her hand in his and draws her swiftly out up Left after him. The hall door closes. The room is empty for a moment. The DINNER-GONG sounds again.*)

MISS RITCHIE. (*Comes in from the sitting-room at back Right. She is in her late thirties, rather prim, very New England. Calling*) Girls? Dinner! (*Absolute silence.*) Where are you, girls?—Girls? *Girls!*

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE I

SCENE: *The bedroom-sitting room shared by ALEX and KATE. The room is fairly small and rather crowded with furniture. The two small beds which stand at either side of the hall door at Center are covered with bright cretonne slip-covers. Up Right is a door leading into the bathroom. At back are two small windows and a window seat. All the furniture is white. On Left is a dressing-table and a low-backed chair. Further down Left is a wicker armchair, strewn with odds and ends of clothes. There is also a double desk, set out into the room, and a round wicker table with a small radio on it. On the wall is a hanging bookcase, and there are rows of textbooks standing between book-ends upon the desk, together with a few framed snapshots, notebooks, scattered papers and the like, and a metal desk-lamp. The dressing-table is fitted out with toilet articles. On the lower shelf of the round wicker table are several magazines. The walls are a light neutral color and the cretonne curtains are bright and gay. There are many sofa-pillows, some on the beds and several on the floor. On the walls there are an etching or two, a colorful map of New York City, and a skiing poster.*

AT RISE: KATE, in wrapper and pajamas, is sitting in the upstage desk-chair, bending over a book. MADY, also with a book, is half-reclining on the bed at Left, near the doorway. Lamps are lighted and the radio is playing a crooned-o swing-tune, very softly.

KATE slams her book shut and pushes it away.

MADY. What's that?

KATE. Theory of Government.

MADY. I did mine first. What are you going to say?

KATE. So far as I can see, the only solution is a qualified dictatorship.

MADY. I cawn't agree, I cawn't agree at all.

KATE. My father says it's the only way out.

MADY. My father says that's a lot of loose talk—and I'll bet he can lick your father.

KATE. I thought you wanted to discuss it seriously.

MADY. I do.

KATE. Well—you heard my opinion.

MADY. But take the Constitution: "Four score and twenty years ago—" Why, it's the absolute spirit of Democracy! We *must* be a Democracy.

KATE. We still can be, in all the essentials—and that isn't even the Constitution.

MADY. What is it, then?

KATE. It's Lincoln. And the fact is, Lincoln is more or less what I'm talking about. What we need at the helm is a man as strong as Lincoln and as popular as Cleveland.

MADY. —Cleveland?

KATE. You know.

MADY. Oh, yes. I forgot *him*.

KATE. Well, in a country as big as this— (*Sud-*

denly she stops, turns toward the door and listens)
Wait a minute!

MADY. What, Bun?

KATE. Wasn't that the last bell? Where is Alex? Why *doesn't* she come?

MADY. If she wants to stay out with this Thatcher, who are we to carp and cavil?

KATE. But she's got hours to do on her thesis, and she promised Beckett—

MADY. (*Turns a somersault off the end of her bed*) What's one thesis, more or less? What I've got to apply myself to is my torso. (*Lying on her back, she elevates her feet in air and bicycles.*)

KATE. Mady! Are you going to work, or are you not?

MADY. I *am* working. Somebody borrowed my bicycle. How can I reduce my tail if people keep snagging my bike away?

KATE. But she'll have to sneak in again, and if Ritchie catches her—

MADY. What are *you* doing, working or worrying?

KATE. Oh, all right. (*She re-opens her book*) Well, in a country of this size—well, take a city like—well—Cincinnati, for instance—

MADY. We were talking about Cleveland: let's take Cleveland.

KATE. All right: take Cleveland. I suppose the percentage of native-born Americans there is hardly—

MADY. Do you know the Westons in Cleveland?

KATE. No, I don't think so.

MADY. They're awfully nice.

KATE. I *am* worried about her, Mady: I'm terribly worried.

MADY. Why? What's so specially alarm-making? She's been late before.

KATE. But the Council would *have* to do something this time! Last week's warning was—

MADY. I wonder if by any chance she's really falling for the oaf.

KATE. I'm beginning to wonder that myself.

MADY. It's hard to tell *what* goes on in that girl.

KATE. —Except that when she's serious about anything, she gets to dwelling on it.

MADY. Dwelling?

KATE. Telling you all the grim details. She gets Total Recall.

MADY. We'll cock an ear and listen. (FRANCES comes in Center, in wrapper and pajamas.) —Hello, Babes. What are you doing up?

FRANCES. I got stuck on my Trig. Isn't Alex in yet?

KATE. Run along, child. We're working and you're supposed to be in bed.

FRANCES. If I'm quiet, can't I squattez-vous here just till she comes?

MADY. Don't say that, Frances.

FRANCES. What?

MADY. (With distaste) "Squattez-vous."

FRANCES. Why not?

KATE. It's banal.

FRANCES. (Relieved) Oh, I was afraid it might be something dirty I didn't know about. (She goes to the gramophone and takes up record) That's my haterest tune.

MADY. —And don't say "haterest."

FRANCES. (Meekly) All right. (She turns the record over.)

MADY. Sometimes I think there's a deal o' work still to be done on you, Frances.

FRANCES. I know I'm not bright. You've been awfully kind.

MADY. —And then she says something like that. What can you do?

KATE. Oh—let it bloom how it will. It has a certain innocent charm. (*She returns to her subject*)—Anyhow, with a large alien population, the only alternative to a dictatorship is out-and-out Communism.

MADY. The alternative is Democracy, pure and simple.

FRANCES. (*Seats herself among the pillows on the floor*) I met a Communist once. He made a pass at me. I don't think they're really sincere, do you?

MADY. (*To KATE*) Fascism is just as bad. Look at Italy. Look at Germany.

FRANCES. I like Italy, what I saw of it last summer, but I certainly don't like Mussolini. I think he has a perfectly horrid face, don't you?—And Mussolini's such an awful name, isn't it? Mussolini. Hatton's a sort of a funny name, too. But it's better than Thatcher, don't you think? "Sam Thatcher"—ugh! It sounds so scratchy.

SALLY. (*Rushes in Center*) Just under the ropes! This pace will kill me! Oh, my dears—that Lippincot! The man's a monster, he's an awful man! He ate an entire chicken, bones and all. And Buck Buchanan was simply furieuse—he sat across the room all alone and glared at us.—And The Lippincot—he's so casual! He told me about how last summer he had a job with the Immigration Department or something, see, and he had to take a lot of Chinamen back to Ella's Island or some place, see, and he lost one, so he just went and got another Chink in a laundry—went in and talked fast and sent him back to China! He says that's the way he does things. Why, a man like that! He's so casual.—

KATE. Did you see Alex?

SALLY. Alex? No. Why? Was she at the Inn?

KATE. I don't know. I've been wondering.

SALLY. (*Seats herself*) That Thatcher of hers—

he's another. I could tell by his eyes. My dear, I *tell* you, the Male is changing!

KATE. Don't worry: they'll always have the same nuisance value.

FRANCES. Don't men make love to you sometimes, Kate?

KATE. Yes, thank you, they do now and then. But they're all so callow. I get to thinking of bright things for them to say, and then they don't say them.

SALLY. What Katie needs is a perfectly pulsating thicket with someone who'd sweep her off her feet.

KATIE. I wouldn't *get* swept. I'd think about something else. I'd say $A \text{ plus } B \text{ squared equals } A \text{ square plus two } A B \text{ plus } B \text{ squared}$.

MADY. My Aunt Julia used to say, "For what are big men, after all, but only little boys grown tall?"

SALLY. I tell you they're different now! In just this last year there's been a complete metamorphosis. "Masterful but manageable" was my ideal—but my dear! here lately the little things absolutely elude the grasp!

KATE. Let them. For me, *I* expect to go through life in single dignity.

SALLY. What I'm afraid of is, we all may have to.

KATE. —Except maybe the real tearing beauties like Franny. Somehow they always seem to muddle through.

FRANCES. Sometimes I hate my looks. I'd much rather be interesting.

MADY. It is having a soul struggle. Let us be brave and face this thing. (*To FRANCES*) Look: just don't try to be bright.

FRANCES. All right, Mady. But—

MADY. —Just find some one useful phrase, and stick to it. Be Jo Sweetness and Light. Say "Lovely. Beautiful. Lovely!" Say it over and over.

FRANCES. "Lovely. Beautiful. Lovely."

SALLY. No. That has no style. No flavor of *je ne sais quoi* de quelque chose de joie de vivre. Try—well—"Save me the neck?"

FRANCES. "Save me the neck."

SALLY. No, no, no!—With a rising inflexion. "Save me the neck?"

FRANCES. But what does it mean?

SALLY. Need you ask?—Now your eyes: bat them. (*She demonstrates*) Down one-two-three. Up one-two-three. Down one-two-three. Up! (*FRANCES attempts it.*)

MADY. At least she gets an A for Effort.

FRANCES. I know I'm going to have to chase Hat all over the place tomorrow. He's so sort of—you know—elusive.

SALLY. My dear, they all are! All at once they've become *the* Problem of Evil. They don't even want to marry you any more!—That is to say, not in any numbers.

KATE. "As the Quarry grows more wary, so much cuter and astuter grow the weapons which we carry."

SALLY. But "wary" isn't the word! They've grown positively intangible. One of the things no girl should forget is the nymph-like quality of the Modern Male.

MADY. "The world is full of women, so why should I get tied up?" they say.

SALLY. Contrary little rascals.

FRANCES. But they aren't *all* like that!

KATE. No. That is only one classification. Another is the Primate Group, which walks upright with heads in the air, and escapes the Female by climbing trees.

MADY. Like our Mr. Thatcher.

KATE. A very fair example. A bas, Mr. Thatcher!

MADY. A bas bas *bas*, Mr. Thatcher!

SALLY. *That* meat-ball.

MADY. O, inedible!

FRANCES. I wonder if Alex is really smit with him?

KATE. Well, I hope not!

SALLY. When you consider the appalling slavery of women! The fools we must make of ourselves with our billing and cooing, and other low sounds emitted during the mating-season.

FRANCES. (*Innocently*) When's that?

MADY. —January through December, including New Year's Eve.

SALLY. But what to do about them? What to *do*?

MADY. Watch for the unmistakable danger-signs of the Attempted Getaway: the raising of the chin, accompanied by a harried look—the throwing back of the ears—the bristling of a three-day beard. These indicate that a suspicion has come up in the dumb-waiter of his mind. Then act.

FRANCES. Oh, you've got me all confused again!

SALLY. (*Rising*) Which reminds me, Buck simply loathes the slightest sign of fatigue. I must get some sleep! I faint. I fall. Good night!

KATE. Good night, Bun.

MADY. 'Night, Sal!

FRANCES. Good night, Sally.

(*SALLY rushes out Center. KATE looks at her watch.*)

KATE. By the time we get through this week-end, we'll all be iron men with lantern jaws.—Five to twelve—where is that idiot Alex?

MADY. She'll come up the stairs in a minute with a good song ringing clear.

KATE. I don't care how she comes up them, so long as she comes soon.

SALLY. (*Sticks a frightened head back into the doorway and speaks in a low, warning whisper*) Miss Ritchie! (*The head is withdrawn and the door closed*)

after it. FRANCES and MADY sit bolt upright. KATE, who has been crossing to the table, stops, frozen in her tracks.)

FRANCES. (*Whispers*) Oh, golly! Poor Alex!

MADY. Quick, Kate! Think of something!

KATE. (*After a moment*) My Garbo-Dietrich act—

MADY. But where?

KATE. In the bathroom. I'm washing her hair. (*She goes swiftly into the bathroom, leaving the door partly open. MADY and FRANCES go to the desk, where they open books and adopt an attitude of extreme studiousness. The SOUND of running water is heard from the bathroom. At last comes a KNOCK at the door. MADY raises her head from her book.*)

MADY. Come in! (*The door opens and Miss RITCHIE enters.*) Oh—Miss Ritchie— (*She and FRANCES rise.*)

MISS RITCHIE. —The disorder of the place!—And may I ask what you're doing here, Frances?

FRANCES. I—we were having a discussion.

MISS RITCHIE. Indeed. About what?

FRANCES. C-communism, and things—and I stayed on to study.

MISS RITCHIE. You must have heard the bell. Since when have you had Senior Privileges?

FRANCES. N-never, Miss Ritchie.

MISS RITCHIE. And never will if you go on this way.

FRANCES. I'm—I'm sorry, Miss Ritchie.

MISS RITCHIE. So you should be.

MADY. Oh, come on, Miss Ritchie—where's the harm in—?

MISS RITCHIE. —I cannot allow the House to become completely disorganized simply on account of a dance. Where is Katherine?

MADY. In the Lu—I mean the bawthroom.

MISS RITCHIE. And Alex?

MADY. Also: Kate's washing her hair for her.

MISS RITCHIE. —At this hour? (*Calling*) Alex? Alex Benson! (*A moment. Then, from the bathroom, a voice remarkably like ALEX's replies:*)

ALEX'S VOICE. Hello! Who's that?

MADY. Miss Ritchie, Alex!

MISS RITCHIE. Come here a moment, please.

ALEX'S VOICE. I can't. I'm in the shower!

KATE. (*Comes into the bathroom doorway, a bath towel tied around her neck, both hands dripping soapsuds*) She's rinsing. I got soap in her eye. Is there anything I *can* do?

MISS RITCHIE. Turn the water off a moment.

KATE. Yes, Miss Ritchie. (*She disappears into the bathroom again. The WATER is turned off.*)

MISS RITCHIE. (*Calls again*) Why didn't you report when you came in?

ALEX'S VOICE. I thought you were asleep. I'm terribly sorry!

MISS RITCHIE. I want to see you immediately after breakfast in the morning. Do you understand?

ALEX'S VOICE. Yes, Miss Ritchie.

MISS RITCHIE. You, too, Katherine!

KATE'S VOICE. Yes, Miss Ritchie.

MISS RITCHIE. (*Turns to MADY*) Madeline, you and Frances pick up your things now, and get to bed.

MADY. Yassum.

MISS RITCHIE. You've got a hard day tomorrow, and heaven knows what tomorrow night will be. —Don't stand there looking like an injured angel, Frances.

FRANCES. No, Miss Ritchie.

MISS RITCHIE. (*Calling*) Bed, Katherine! Bed, Alex!

ALEX'S VOICE. Yes, Miss Ritchie!

KATE'S VOICE. Yes, Miss Ritchie! (*MISS RITCHIE goes out as briskly as she entered.*)

MADY. Whew!

FRANCES. I was simply scared pink.

MADY. (*Calls in the direction of the bathroom*) Come on out, Garbo—and bring Marlene with you!

KATE. (*Appears again in the doorway, drying her hands on the bath towel and highly indignant*) Never in my life will I do that again! (*She flings the towel into the bathroom and comes into the bedroom*) Of all the low, deceiving—

MADY. (*Chin on hands in mock adoration*) You were just gorgeous, Miss McKim. May I have your autograph? (*Again the GONG sounds from the hall, a single stroke.*)

KATE. Go on—get out of my room! I'm sick of both of you.

MADY. Ah-ah-ah! Temper!

KATE. Skat! I mean it. (*MADY moves toward the Center door, FRANCES following.*)

MADY. Kick Alex for me.

(*Just as they reach the door it opens and ALEX slides in.*)

FRANCES. Alex!

ALEX. (*Eyes are half-closed, her manner is distraught*) That's right.

KATE. Well! It's about time.

ALEX. Is it? For what—

KATE. We've been worried sick about you.

ALEX. I'm sorry.

MADY. But wasn't everything locked up?

FRANCES. How did you get in, Alex?

ALEX. Through Mildred's window. My shins are in ribbons.

KATE. Do you know what time it is?

ALEX. I've got a fair idea.

KATE. After twelve. You ought to be ashamed.

ALEX. Yes, Kate. (*She takes off her shoes and stockings.*)

KATE. You knew you had to work—what on earth kept you?

ALEX. Oh—nothing much.

MADY. But where yo' been at, Honey?

ALEX. Oh—just dinner and around—I feel pretty thrown—

KATE. And where's "around," for instance?

ALEX. We had dinner at a place called Speed Maloney's, on the Deerfield Road.

FRANCES. Why, Alex Benson!

ALEX. It was tame as could be.

KATE. You didn't dine until this hour.

ALEX. Not quite, Katie.

MADY. Then what went on?

ALEX. Well—oh—I don't know— (*Her head droops*) It was a funny evening. (*MADY, FRANCES and KATE are now watching her in growing concern.*)

FRANCES. How, Alex?

ALEX. Oh, just funny.—You see— (*She stops*) Oh, well—

KATE. Listen, my dear: if you want to tell us what happened, tell us. And if you don't want to, don't. (*Then:*) —What happened?

ALEX. (*Almost in a monotone, as if giving a report*) Well—it was further out there than we thought and we sat at dinner until long past ten. Then we were so full of food we decided a walk would be good for us. It was bright as day, so we struck out across a meadow—and we came on a path that led up quite a hill—we're sort of hill-crazy, you know—so there was nothing for it but for us to get to the top. And we sat ourselves down right next to the sky and it was beautiful, beautiful. (*KATE and MADY exchange glances.*)

KATE. It must have been, to keep you till—

ALEX. —So there we sat and sat, with his arm around me and the Honor System on in full force.

MADY. You're sure of *that*, are you?

ALEX. I'm positive— Oh, it was darling! He went so far as to admit he was attracted to me and I said, "Physically, I suppose you mean," and he hemmed and he hawed and I said, "Don't stammer, boy. That's a compliment to any college girl. The higher the education, the lower the appeal." Then he said what he chiefly did was to like me enormously. And I swelled with pride and in a high, clear childish treble admitted I liked him fine, too, and he voiced his Brave Ideals again and I bore up indifferently well. I was wonderful. I was the spirit of the Little Twisted Smile and I felt so happy and wifely and— (*Suddenly she averts her head*) Oh, dear—

KATE. I think the young man's taking too much of your valuable time and attention. You've got enough on your hands without him. You'd better just bid him a sweet goodbye till Commencement.

ALEX. I won't have to.

KATE. No? Why not?

ALEX. Tomorrow he's going away for two years.

KATE. Two years!

MADY. *Years!* But where on earth—?

ALEX. —And maybe longer—and maybe everywhere on earth! He's going to see the world like Chicken Little.

KATE. (*After a moment, lightly*) But do you care terribly?

ALEX. Of course not. It's very nice for him, I'm sure. Care? Why should I?

FRANCES. But—but then, *Alex*—what is the matter with you?

ALEX. I don't know.

FRANCES. But—but if it should turn out to be love, or something—I always thought love was supposed to make you awfully happy—

ALEX. Don't let them fool you. Never fall in love, my child. Fall into the deepest pit, the darkest hole

—but never into love, never, never into love. (*A moment. Then she rises*) I—I'm certain I never intend to. (*And crosses to the bathroom*) —I want a drink of water. (*And goes out. There is a moment of stunned silence. Then FRANCES speaks:*)

FRANCES. Two years!—I could cry for her. I *am* crying.

MADY. (*Appalled*) You don't actually suppose it's the real thing, do you?

KATE. It looks like it, doesn't it?

MADY. It looks terribly like it.

KATE. Well, I mean to find out, I can tell you that.

MADY. She'll catch on, and shut up like a clam.

KATE. She won't catch on the way *I'm* going to find out.

MADY. If it's true we've got to *do* something, Kate! Damn it, she's our Alex, isn't she?

KATE. She certainly is, and we certainly must.

MADY. But what, Katie? What can we? (*A brief silence. KATE thinks. Then:*)

KATE. You break your lunch dates tomorrow, both of you. And tell Sally.—We'll meet in her room right after classes.

FRANCES. Twelve o'clock?

KATE. Twelve promptly. If we're going to do it, there'll be a lot to work out.

MADY. —But do what, Bun? What *can* we do?

KATE. (*Her eyes flash*) —Get him for her, of course! Get the rat!

MADY. (*Stares*) You mean?

KATE. Yes. Now go along. (*She begins to take the covers off both beds, to fold them and put them away.*)

MADY. Hook or crook?

KATE. Hook and crook.

MADY. (*A slow smile of anticipation spreads over MADY's face. She rubs her hands together with relish*) When do we start?

KATE. As soon as we're sure. (*She gestures toward the door*) Go on— (*And calls in the direction of the bathroom*) Alex? Alex, dear— (*MADY and FRANCES move toward the Center door.*)

FRANCES. Sometimes I don't know *what* to think about love.

MADY. (*Chuckles softly*) Oh, the poor little fellow—the poor little man— (*The door closes after them. KATE smoothes ALEX's pillow. The bathroom door opens and ALEX's voice is heard:*)

ALEX. Kate?

KATE. (*Growls*) Kate yourself.

ALEX'S VOICE. Have they gone?

KATE. Yes. Are you planning to spend the night in there?

ALEX'S VOICE. Oh, I'm so tired of my face. I'm tired of all our faces. What are we all about? Witty, busy little Miss Benson—answer me that.

KATE. Quit talking to yourself and come on.

ALEX'S VOICE. I'm low in the mind. Bun, I'm sad.

KATE. Wash your face and come to bed!

ALEX'S VOICE. He told me my face was like a lost young moon in the dusk.

KATE. (*Snorting*) He didn't!

ALEX. (*Re-enters in nightdress and light wrapper, her feet bare*) He did, too, and very nice of him. You know, when you have washed a face for a number of years, you don't think of it as a lost young moon.—And he said I had a fine, firm little jaw—not chin, jaw—a firm little jaw. He said *it* would see me through anything.

KATE. He's perfectly revolting.

ALEX. No, darling, he's not. He's sweet, very sweet. (*She examines herself in the long mirror, turning around and round*) Oh, dear—I look like something that's just crawled out of the Ganges. (*She sits on the side of her bed, chin in hand*)

—Somehow, Kate, Life has not prepared me for this situation.

KATE. (*Offhand*) What situation's that?

ALEX. This very odd little fix in which I find myself.

KATE. Fix?

ALEX. There was a time when I set quite a value on the Benson girl—

KATE. Don't you still?

ALEX. No. I've been marked down to nothing. Wrap me up and take me home. If these are the happiest years of my life, tell me, pretty gypsy, what the future holds for me?

KATE. Don't you talk like that! It's—it's an insult to us all!

ALEX. Forgive me, Kate— Everyone please forgive me.

KATE. And don't be so damned meek.—When do you see the lout next?

ALEX. He isn't a lout.—We've got a lunch-date.

KATE. (*Takes off her wrapper and gets into bed*) I was afraid you'd try to sneak the morning. You can't, you know.

ALEX. I know I can't.—Oh, Katie—

KATE. What, child?

ALEX. He's going away!

KATE. I know, darling.

ALEX. And he won't be back and he *won't* be back, and what, oh what am I going to do without him?

KATE. You?—But for heaven's sake—you've never depended on anyone!

ALEX. I know: im-imagine caring.

KATE. Of course if you set your mind to it, you might get him over a few of his big ideas.

ALEX. I don't want to. I loathe the kind of girl who'd do that to a man. I wouldn't. I couldn't. I won't.

KATE. They're a strange little People, men.

ALEX. They're strong, Katie.

KATE. Sure! They're the second-strongest sex there is.

ALEX. This is a dreary place. I'd like to get away from all such. (*Wearily she turns back the covers of her own bed and gets into it*) I've got a headache: I never have headaches.

KATE. (*Puts out the bed-light*) It'll be gone in the morning. Good night. (*WARN Curtain.*)

ALEX. Good night. (*They settle down upon their pillows. There is a long silence. Then:*) Isn't it funny—they talk in books about your heart feeling like a stone in your breast, you know, and it does—really heavy like a stone.

KATE. What really is the matter with you, Bun? —You can tell *me*.

ALEX. I guess what I've got is what they call Dumb Despair. I love him, Kate.

KATE. Yes, Bun, I guess that's just it in a nutshell.

ALEX. It hurts like anything.

KATE. Shut your eyes, dear. We'll find something to do about it.

ALEX. But there isn't anything.

KATE. Why? He's only a man, isn't he? And we're five to one, aren't we?

ALEX. No, no, no—I wouldn't allow it! I wouldn't. I couldn't. I won't.—Anyhow, he's too stubborn.

KATE. "As the quarry grows more wary—"

ALEX. What?

KATE. Never mind. You go to sleep. Lord! That one of *us* should be taken this way!

ALEX. I know: I'm so ashamed.—But I'll get over it, of course. People always do. In two years he'll be nothing to me—absolutely nothing. I won't even know he exists. If someone says to me—"Do you happen to know a man called Sam Thatcher?" I'll

say, "Why, no. Thatcher? Thatcher? Who's he?"
Two years—two whole, everlasting—

KATE. Alex—

ALEX. I'm weeping. Can you believe it? They're actually coming right out of my eyes and running all over my face—my lost young moon of a face—rivers of them—right down to my firm little jaw—*(Her voice breaks into sobs)* —rivers—rivers—river, stay away from my jaw— Oh, Katie—Katie—what can I do?

KATE. There, Bun—take it easy, Bun.

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE II

SCENE: *The living-room. Now there are a few extra chairs of white wicker which have been brought down from the girls' rooms. Bowls of flowers stand on mantel and tables, also in preparation for the Dance.*

TIME: *About three o'clock, Saturday afternoon.*

AT RISE: MADY is at the telephone, KATE beside her writing a note at the desk. FRANCES and SALLY are seated upon the sofa, intently listening to the telephone conversation.

MADY. —But the point is, you can't lose! He has real ability.

KATE. *(Pokes her)* Experience. Experience.

MADY. —As well as loads of experience.

SALLY. Charm, you fool! Charm!

MADY. —And of course he can literally charm a bird off a tree. In fact, he often has. In fact, taken

all in all, he's quite the Roaring Boy.—What, Father? (*She laughs*) I know! I have a special little outfit I wear for it. But *will* you? (*A moment*) Oh, I simply adore you for this! You're Jo Angelface in the flesh. Send a wire to the Inn, will you? Samuel Thatcher— No—right away.—This afternoon—this instant. He's supposed to be leaving right after lunch.

KATE. —*Supposed* to be.

MADY. I know; but he hasn't gone yet. No—the dance doesn't interest him.

SALLY. Can't it be made to?

MADY. Shh!—What? Oh, no—no, I've got plenty.—Well, of course I can always use it. Thanks, dear, thanks over and over. I'll see you the sixteenth. Love to Mother, if you run into her anywhere.—You bet!—Goodbye! (*She replaces the telephone*) Mr. Platt, my father, is a gentleman.

KATE. Economic factor taken care of. *That* ought to help. (*She seals her note*) So ought this.

FRANCES. What is it, Kate?

MADY. A letter? Who's it to?

KATE. One thing at a time. Listen: Did I hear Hat say something yesterday about knowing the Chief of Police here?

FRANCES. Yes. They got stewed together one night last Fall. It was disgusting. (*MILDRED comes in from rear with a vase of flowers.*)

KATE. Which is Sam's Ford?

MADY. That dizzy little blue roadster that stood out in front of the Inn all night.

FRANCES. It was Hat's originally.

KATE. All night? Are there no parking laws in this town?

SALLY. (*Flings out her arms to her*) Genius! Sheer, unadulterated—

KATE. Quiet, you idiot! Do you want to wake her up?

FRANCES. It's nearly three o'clock.

KATE. Even so. She didn't close an eye until after eight. (*The TELEPHONE rings. The GIRLS freeze.*)

FRANCES. (*Whispers*) I forgot to tell you: he telephoned again half an hour ago.

MADY. That makes three times. (*Again the TELEPHONE rings.*)

KATE. Answer it, will you, Mildred?

MILDRED. (*Goes to the telephone*) Hello. Yes—Well, I don't know, exactly— (*To the GIRLS*) It's him again.

MADY. Take the message.

MILDRED. (*To the telephone*) Will you give me the message, please? (*To the GIRLS*) It's about lunch, he says.

KATE. Say Miss Benson is sorry, but she can't make it. She'll call him when she can.

MILDRED. (*To the telephone*) Miss Benson is very sorry but she can't make lunch anyhow. She'll phone you when she's able.—What? (*To the GIRLS*) He wants to speak to her.

KATE. She can't come to the telephone.

MILDRED. But if he asks me why—

KATE. You don't *know* why! (*She indicates the telephone*) Go on, Mildred!

MILDRED. No, she can't make the telephone, either.—What?—I haven't any idea. You better just be a little patient. (*She replaces the telephone and moves toward the door.*)

MADY. How did he sound?

MILDRED. Well—I suppose he'll live.

SALLY. Splendide! Parfaitment! (*MILDRED goes out up Left, muttering:*)

MILDRED. Funny animals. When you don't want them around, you can't keep them away.

SALLY. Four calls!—Promising, to say the least—

KATE. Sally, what I'm wondering is just what *you're* good for.

SALLY. You mean when we get right up on the front line, my dear?

KATE. Yes: that personal touch—and yet not too personal.

SALLY. Leave it to me. I have a ploosh idea. I pant for action.

• KATE. Everything's got to dovetail, you know.

SALLY. Oh, my idea does much more than that!

KATE. Well, just look out you don't *overdo* it.—That goes for everyone.

FRANCES. But how can we tell if we are?

KATE. Watch his eyes.

MADY. If they start to glaze over, desist.

SALLY. My dear, it's the simplest thing in the Western Hemisphere. The total you have to do is merely—I mean to say, the whole lurid secret of it is a kind of nonchalance.

KATE. Maybe you need another rehearsal, Fran.

FRANCES. No, no! Then I'd forget everything!

MADY. I hope that hot soup and the milk were enough for her.

KATE. She finally went off to sleep like a baby.

MADY. Isn't it awful, what it does to you?

KATE. The humiliation of it!

SALLY. I put the organdy dress on a chair beside her bed. As a loan, my dear—with love from Sally.

MADY. Big-hearted Sal.

(MISS RITCHIE *passes through the room from up Left on her way to the sitting-room at Right.*)

MISS RITCHIE. And what is it you're up to now, my young ladies?

MADY. Nothing. We were just talking.

FRANCES. We're sort of waiting for our tea-dates.

MISS RITCHIE. You all ought to be out of doors

on a fine afternoon like this. I *don't* know why you huddle so.

MADY. Who's huddling?

MISS RITCHIE. What's that?

MADY. I said "undoubtedly."

MISS RITCHIE. (*Continues on her way. The TELEPHONE rings as she goes out*) You look like a pack of conspirators.—Someone answer that.

MADY. (*Softly*) How did she guess? (*She goes to the telephone*) Maybe it's Doc Boyd for me. He and Buchanan are feeling terribly neglected.

KATE. You've no time for them now! Not until dinner!

MADY. I know. (*To the telephone*) Hello? Who?

SALLY. Buck interests me, in a way. I think there's something faintly decadent about him—a kind of Venetian something.

MADY. Shhh! Yes.—No, it's Mady Platt. (*The GIRLS listen intently. She turns and winks broadly at them. They crowd about the telephone. MADY continues*) Miss Benson? But who is it wants her, please? Who?—*Who?* I don't quite get it.—Oh, Mr. Thatcher! Oh, yes—of course!—No. She can't. She'll call you when she can. What—? What's happened to her? Well—

KATE. (*Seizes the telephone and talks into it rapidly and confidentially*) —You see, the fact is, she caught on fire—a short-circuit or a careless cigarette-butt, we don't know which—and we can't get her out. I don't know how much insurance you carry on her, but I do think she'll be hard to replace. So perhaps you *had* better come over and—

SALLY. (*Seizes the telephone*) —And any of the other visiting firemen who care to. What? Why! What a thing to say to a lady! Would you turn these sacred halls into a locker-room? (*She hangs up.*) He waxeth vituperative.

KATE. (*Looks at her watch*) Five to three, and all is swell.

ALEX'S VOICE. (*Voice is heard from the top of the stairs*) Sally! Kate! Mady! Are you down there?

FRANCES. She's awake!

SALLY. Hello—hellee—hello!

ALEX'S VOICE. Mates!

MADY. That doesn't sound so depressed.—Mate!

KATE. (*Softly*) But look out now, everyone! Remember—she's to know nothing about it—nothing. And if she starts to sink again, build her up!

ALEX. (*Comes down the stairs in a lovely Spring evening-dress, half-on*) Sally Prescott, you angel, you! I'm a new woman.

SALLY. Does it fit? (*She turns ALEX around, examining the dress like a dressmaker.*)

ALEX. It was made for me! Oh, my heart's thanks! But I slept right through lunch! Has—has he telephoned?

MADY. Four times. Signed "Anxious." He's coming over.

ALEX. He'll never forgive me.

MADY. Wait and see how he will. Bun, in that little kit you will mow them down by the thousands.

KATE. I never in my life saw anything more becoming.

ALEX. —Four times!

FRANCES. It's a dream!—But isn't the neck-line just a bit high?

ALEX. What! Would you have me flaunt my front like any hussy?

SALLY. (*To FRANCES*) That's its style, idiot. (*Now they are ALL plucking at the dress, hooking it, settling it.*)

ALEX. (*Examining herself in the mirror*) Oh, I

hate my looks. I'm earthy and horsey and built like an ironing-board.

KATE. You have a sweet little shape and you know it.

ALEX. I wouldn't look at me twice. Stringy, is what I am. I'd like to be opulent. I'd like to arrive in a room slightly ahead of myself.

MADY. It's the dress these days, dear. It isn't what's in it.

SALLY. Of course, I think the *in-ter-est* should be more on the shoulder.

ALEX. How do you get it there?

SALLY. A bow—a ribbon—something *fabulously* feminine.

ALEX. La! Am I to put forth ruffles?

KATE. You could do worse.

ALEX. I am the spirit of the wench kissing behind hedges. Oh, why am I not all serene and lovely and courtly and dignified, and the Portrait of a Lady?

MADY. You are, but still in the embryonic.

KATE. Wait till you're thirty.

ALEX. I guess I'll have to. I have so little to recommend me.—If I was as good and kind and clever as you, or as nice and rich as Mady, or as pretty as Frances, or as woolly-wild as Sally—but no—just the same old horse with a fly up its nose.

KATE. (*Tries a flower in her hair*) A horse often wins by a nose—maybe the fly helps.

ALEX. No—the mark of the boneyard is upon me. My spirits droop, and my feet are as sled-runners. I ought to take a great heinous gun to myself.

KATE. You stop talking like that!

SALLY. That's *practically* suicidal! (*MILDRED comes in from hall with more flowers, which she arranges in vases.*)

ALEX. Mildred—are you in love?

MILDRED. No. But I know a girl is—and was it swell!

ALEX. Why? Is she so happy in love?

MILDRED. I said *was* it. All of a sudden he don't come round any more. I say to her, "What did he ever do for you, outside of talking? Will you tell me that?"

ALEX. Blight! Everywhere blight!

MADY. (*Throws an arm around her shoulder and bends over her*) Now listen, baby! Are yuh gonna back down on us like this after we trained yuh and worked over yuh? Whatsa matter? Ain't yuh got the guts? (*She thumps her on the back*) Go down that track wid a bee up your nose! Show if yuh've got th' stuff, great big stuff! Come on—if yuh've got th' stuff!

ALEX. (*Laughs*) All right! All right!

MADY. Now how about your hair? I give a dandy brush.

ALEX. Oh, Mady, would you? My hand's too limp to lift one.

SALLY. By the way, let me *see* your hands— (*She picks up one and examines it*) But, my dear, this blank nail polish. Why! They're nothing but finger-nails! Coral pink's what you need.

MADY. —Ten little sea-shells, all in a row.

FRANCES. (*Starts up the stairs*) I'll get my remover.

MILDRED. I got a excellent lotion. "Glamor," it's called.

ALEX. Thanks, Mildred. That's just what I need. Oh! I have the ague. I'm shaking all over.

SALLY. I'm in a *towering* tizzy myself. My God! Come on! (*She follows FRANCES up the stairs*) Miss Benson, the Belle of the Ball!

ALEX. (*A sudden wail*) But he won't be here for it!

MADY, Any bets? (*The DOORBELL rings. KATE goes to answer it. ALEX starts and stares. MADY slips her arm through hers and draws her to the*

stairs) —If it's Little Black Sambo, it won't hurt him to wait a bit.—You just come along quietly with me. (*And leads her up the stairs*) You'll straighten out, old man. Just about five years in this nice peaceful place and you'll be a useful member of society again. (*They go out. KATE re-enters with HAT.*)

HAT. —In half a minute. He stopped to get a chocolate-milk. (*MILDRED moves toward the sitting-room up Right.*)

KATE. Oh, Mildred—before you go— (*MILDRED stops and turns. KATE gives her the letter from the desk*) Be an angel and deliver this to Mr. Beckett for me, will you?

MILDRED. But they need me in the kitchen.

KATE. —It's just around the corner. And be sure to give it to him himself, because it's asking him to the dance, and I want an answer right away.

MILDRED. (*Going out up Left*) —Always something.

HAT. (*Incredulously*) —Asking a Prof to the dance?

KATE. Yes. Why not?

HAT. In cold blood?

KATE. Sure. He's an extremely intelligent man and I'd like to have him on hand. (*She adds*) —You know—for contrast?

HAT. I get you.

KATE. Look, Hat: how well do you know the Chief of Police?

HAT. Lady, you wouldn't believe: I carried him up two flights of stairs last Thanksgiving.

KATE. He must have been grateful for that.

HAT. He cried on my shoulder. There's nothing he wouldn't do for me. Why? Who's in trouble?

(*SAM enters up Left.*)

KATE. No one, yet.

SAM. Look! What is all this junk? What's the matter with Alex?

KATE. So it's you—

SAM. Why? Any objections?

KATE. Yes, numerous.

SAM. Madame wishes to lodge a complaint?

KATE. Madame would like to plant one right between your eyes.

HAT. (*Calling upstairs*) Oh, Frances Fenn! Stick out your neck!

KATE. (*Wheels about on him*) Wait a minute! (*Then, to SAM:*) You slept well, I trust?

SAM. Ten hours straight. Why?

KATE. Alex didn't.

SAM. —Had to work. I know. She told me she was going to.—But what happened about lunch? And why all the telephone hocus-pocus?

KATE. And did she tell you that instead of bumming around on hills with you until all hours of the night, she should have been working then, too?

SAM. No. She skipped that. Listen: I've got to leave in about half an hour, and I'd sort of like to see the girl.

KATE. You may be interested to know that Alex hasn't a cent to her name and her thesis is due Thursday and her degree and her job both depend on it. Jobs don't grow on bushes quite as they did. Give it a thought some cold night in Russia, will you? And tell yourself who's responsible. (*MADY comes down the stairs. A quick glance passes between KATE and her. KATE turns to HAT*) Here we go, Hat. (*She links her arm through his.*)

HAT. Do we? Where?

KATE. Don't tell me you've forgotten! (*She leads him out up Left. MADY comes down the stairs and up to SAM.*)

MADY. Sammy Thatchinoff, as I live and breathe!

SAM. Incidentally, how *do* you live and breathe?

MADY. I hear you're off to Siberia in a spanky new suit and a cloud of confetti.

SAM. Maybe you'd like to come along, as dead weight.

MADY. "O, frankly fickle and ficklely true, do you know what the years will do to you, to your love and you what the years will do—?"

SAM. Run and get a new head, will you? (*MADY seats herself, leans her chin on her hand and gazes at him aggravatingly.*) I usually charge for this, but in your case—

MADY. —I'd pay anything. I've seen dolts before in my life, aye, and dullards. Naturals and imbeciles have been my familiars—

SAM. You'll get no argument there.

MADY. But for a first-class, Grade-A, top-of-the-shelf Zanzibar Zaney, you have renewed assurances of my high esteem.

SAM. Maybe if you strained a bit you could fall back into English. I know it's tough here.

MADY. May I take five minutes of your time, if I play my cards right?

SAM. Why? What are you selling?

MADY. Tell me one thing: where, in the name of Saint Elihu, do you ever expect to find her like again?

SAM. Whose? Alex's?

MADY. Quick, aren't you?

SAM. You don't have to sell Alex to *me*, my good woman.

MADY. Oh, it has powers of appreciation, has it?

SAM. I think more of Alex than of any girl I've ever known. How do you like that?

MADY. I think it's very big of you. (*She leans forward on her elbow*) You see, Thatchinoff, I'm very impulsive. I bloweth where I listeth. And when I see what looks like the one man in the world who

could keep that brilliant mass of heavenly contradictions in order, passing up his chance, I get to talking.

SAM. You certainly do. (*A moment. Then:*) Look, Mady: girls are funny; they don't as a rule understand a man's point of view—

MADY. Away over their heads, I suppose.

SAM. —But as it happens, Alex does, and perfectly. There's no faky romance between *us*. She knows I have the next ten years of my life all planned out.—And that in my early period, to live as I plan to, I must be alone.

MADY. I hope you don't think she's going to wait for you.

SAM. No. I'm not counting on it.

MADY. I'll give her about three months in New York before some attractive man snaps her up.

SAM. (*Laughs*) Mady, you're wonderful. Do you mind if I have you stuffed?

SALLY. (*Comes breathlessly down the stairs pulling on her hat. To MADY*) Alex wants you.

MADY. Isn't Kate with her?

SALLY. No—she wants you. (*MADY hurries up the stairs. SALLY turns to SAM*) That Alex! Honestly, what a girl! Have you any influence with her? Does she respond?

SAM. What's the matter with her? Will someone, for cat's sake, come clean for once?

SALLY. But we don't know. She won't say. No word escapes her lips. She's so deep. She's profound. My dear, the girl's depths are unplumable.

SAM. Maybe she ate too much lunch.

SALLY. Don't jest. This is serious! She's a type, that's what she is. She's not just another person. It's a case of the Great Heart and the Supreme Intellect at war, my dear. A girl like that! Of a blandness to the eye, but inside life or death, kiss or kill. Definitely suicidal, my dear—gallant to the end, but

then pistol or poison, poison or pistol! (*She hurries to the hall and out*) Au 'voir till tonight! Save me the waltz.

SAM. (*Shouts after her*) I won't be here tonight! (*FRANCES has come down the stairs, deep concern upon her face. SAM turns to her.*)

FRANCES. (*In a whisper*) Was she talking about Alex?

SAM. (*Also in a whisper*) Yes. (*He catches himself, and speaks up like a man*) Yes. Yes, she was.—Listen, little girl, you've got a fairly honest little face. Perhaps you'll tell me what the—

FRANCES. I don't blame her for being worried. Oh—that man!

SAM. What man?

FRANCES. I'm sure it's him. The way she works for him! She'll be a wreck. And it's always Professor Beckett this, and Professor Beckett that. He has some kind of a strange power over her, I don't know what.

SAM. A Prof, you say? How old is he?

FRANCES. Not so very. (*Her voice sinks lower*) If only it was some other subject he taught—like Math, say, or Physics—

SAM. What does he?

FRANCES. (*A whisper*) Biology. He knows just how people work. I think that's his power. You ought to see what he can make frogs do.

SAM. (*With infinite scorn*) A teacher to girls! Can you imagine?

FRANCES. What if he should make her run off with him to Eppsville?

SAM. Eppsville?

FRANCES. (*Nodding rapidly*) Yes. That's where they go, you know. On the Merrick Road. It's terribly corrupt: night or day, and you don't have to have a license or anything. Last year Milly Winters did it. It's only about fourteen miles out. You turn

left at the filling-station and follow along the creek to a kind of pumpkin-yellow house, where the Justice of Peace lives.—Do you suppose she's really smit with him or do you think the way I do: that it's just infatuation? (*KATE re-enters from the hall.*)

SAM. I don't suppose anything about it. The hell with him. (*Then*) What does he look like?

FRANCES. Well, you wouldn't exactly call him terribly handsome, but—

KATE. I've finished with the iron, Fran, if you want to press your dress.

FRANCES. Oh, thanks, Kate. (*She flies up the stairs. KATE comes up to SAM.*)

KATE. Listen, Sam: I may have been a little abrupt a moment ago. I don't want you to think I don't sympathize with your feelings about Alex. I know too well how men fall for her.

SAM. Oh? Who, for instance—?

KATE. That has nothing to do with it. The point is, she has a real career ahead of her, and must be free to follow it. She—

SAM. Who's going to stop her?

KATE. Oh, I know you're the kind of a man who's simply egged on by opposition, but I'll have to risk that! I like you. I think you're a very good number—but for you to marry Alex now is absolutely out of the question.

SAM. Listen: Did I ever—?

KATE. I warn you I'll do everything I possibly can to prevent it.

SAM. You won't have to. You've got the wrong slant entirely. To me, marriage is an obsolete institution.

KATE. That's what you say.

SAM. I think it's all a cheap pretense, a hollow mockery. In my opinion it's nothing more or less

than middle-class morality. *I want to live Life to its fullest and finest—*

KATE. La, you are the spirit of the slogan.

SAM. I'm only telling you what I think about marriage.

KATE. I don't agree with you. *I think sometimes it may form a bond.*

SAM. Not for Joseph, not for Joe.

KATE. Well, if you suppose for a minute I'm going to stand by and see her run off with you *without* marriage—

SAM. I tell you there's no idea of anything of the sort!

KATE. Don't think you're fooling me, Sam.

SAM. Oh, for the love of—! And what right have you got to mix in, anyhow?

KATE. (*Smiles provokingly*) The right of one roommate to run the other's affairs for her.

SAM. Honestly, I'll be so damned glad to get out of here! Where is the girl? I want to see her.

KATE. —And you haven't even got a job. You couldn't even support her.—I suppose you're figuring on a sweet little helpmeet. Well, let me tell you—

SAM. (*Almost shouting*) Let me tell you a woman can never help a man. The most she can do is not to hinder him!

KATE. (*Softly*) —A fine attitude to base a life-relationship on. A fine— (*The DOORBELL rings. KATE calls in the direction of the hall*) Come in! (*And turns again to SAM*) Don't think you've fooled me with your big talk, either. (*She crosses to the stairs as THE LIPPINCOT enters, a telegram in hand. KATE turns on the stair-landing for a parting shot*) Just remember, I've warned you. When you leave this house, you leave alone. We'll have no more Eppsville scandals, thank you.—And I'd much prefer you'd leave *before* the dance.

SAM. I expect to! And if I feel like it, I'll take half the college along!

KATE. Libertine!

SAM. Tell her I'm here—tell her I'm waiting!

KATE. She knows you're here! (*She goes out.* SAM stands frowning at the floor.)

THE LIPPINCOT. Where's the body?

SAM. —A lot of hooey. They're all crazy.—What? (*THE LIPPINCOT gives him the telegram.*)

THE LIPPINCOT. This just came for you at the Inn. I opened it. I thought it might be something unimportant. (*HAT wanders in up Left, chewing gum and looking pleased with himself.* THE LIPPINCOT extends a hand to him) Chew me. (*HAT gives him a stick of gum.*) Contents noted.

HAT. For a guy with money, you're the niftiest, thriftiest, most poorly fitted-outest with—

SAM. (*Reading the telegram*) —Say!

HAT. Why? What is it?

SAM. But listen: "Can offer you position advertising department one of my Washington papers starting July first or earlier fifty dollars weekly to begin stop If interested will arrange interview next week. Reply immediately Empire State Building. Benjamin Platt." (*HAT takes the telegram out of his hand.*)

HAT. You're kidding. (*And scans it*) Why didn't I go out to make the *News*?—What does the hockey team get you, but a charley-horse? (*And returns it*) Gosh, if I had an offer like that I'd marry Frances and raise a family. Frances or somebody. (*THE LIPPINCOT is watching SAM, who ponders deeply. Finally:*)

THE LIPPINCOT. Well?

SAM. Fifty's not bad, is it?

HAT. Listen to him. Not bad! Two of 'em make a hundred—and I don't know anything that stinks less than a hundred bucks. (*He wanders to the stair-*

case. KATE hurries down it and moves swiftly to the hall, pausing for an instant as she passes SAM.)

KATE. Telegrams? Who's dead? (*And continues on out up Left.*)

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Again*) Well?

SAM. Who is he, anyway?—And I wonder how he knew I was here? It must have been forwarded. (*He examines the address*) Nope.

HAT. (*Calls upstairs*) Oh, Frances Fenn! Stick out your neck! (*Then*) God! Twenty-five hundred a year!

THE LIPPINCOT. (*To SAM*) Well, what are you going to do about it?

SAM. (*A sudden thought*) Look: suppose I get him to make it a roving correspondent's job instead—and we send back stories— (*THE LIPPINCOT'S face is still stony. SAM adds:*) And photographs, of course.

THE LIPPINCOT. (*His eye lights*) Not a bad idea, if he will.—Otherwise—

SAM. We might have to wait over a day or two in New York to get it sewed up.

THE LIPPINCOT. That might be worth it.

SAM. I won't wire. I'll go right back and telephone him—make an appointment for tomorrow.

HAT. Tomorrow's Sunday.

SAM. If he's as hot as this to get me he'll see me all right! (*He hurries out up Left, as MADDY comes down the stairs and crosses to the hallway.*)

HAT. Howdy, Miss Platt.

MADDY. Howdy, Hats.

HAT. Where's Frances?

MADDY. Coming.—Where's Thatchinoff off to in such a rush?

HAT. Big affairs.

MADDY. —This modern pace! Oh, for the good old days of the automobile! (*She goes out up Left.*)

THE LIPPINCOT. (*To HAT*) Miss who, did you say?

HAT. Platt. Mady Platt. You met her.

THE LIPPINCOT. What's her father's name?

HAT. His name's Platt, too.

THE LIPPINCOT. What's his first name?

HAT. Benjamin—known as "Banjo." He's stiff with money—owns a chain of papers all through the South. Mady must have put in a word for Sam.

THE LIPPINCOT. I knew it! Why, the foxy little fox.

HAT. How come?

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Suddenly THE LIPPINCOT bursts out*) It's a dirty, low-down capitalist, female plot!

HAT. A what?

THE LIPPINCOT. A trap! All set—all baited-up for him!

HAT. Who?

THE LIPPINCOT. Sometime I'd like a few words with that young lady.

HAT. I don't get you. If somebody offered *this* baby fifty— (*FRANCES comes down the stairs.*) Hello, Pet. My, you look pretty. May I steal a kiss?

FRANCES. Hat! Will you never stop that?

HAT. —Then let's go and take a pull at some tea, shall we?

FRANCES. But you're having it with *me*, you know.

HAT. I accept. (*Unnoticed by them, ALEX starts down the stairs, now in another dress. HAT turns to THE LIPPINCOTT*) When do you and Sam leave?

THE LIPPINCOTT. (*Between his teeth*) Right away. Just as soon as he gets the Big Goodbyes over. (*ALEX slows on her way down the stairs.*)

HAT. I hope nothing more holds you up.

THE LIPPINCOT. Nothing's going to!

HAT. (*To FRANCES*) It's wonderful to have a car of your own, isn't it?

FRANCES. It must be.

HAT. It makes you so independent-like. Just come and go as you please— (*To THE LIPPINCOT*) Well, bum voyage.

THE LIPPINCOT. Thanks.

HAT. Bring me back an ikon, and a couple of Kremlins.—And tell Sam to look out for the Russian dames.

THE LIPPINCOT. He won't have to. *They* have some sense in their heads.

HAT. Certainly a good place for it. Come on, Fran— (*They start out up Left, arm in arm*) Why these constant rebuffs, my love? Why this fear of the chaste salute?

FRANCES. Hat! Talk about not having *sense!* (*They are gone. A moment, then ALEX continues her way down to the stairs at a somewhat different pace. THE LIPPINCOT turns and sees her.*)

ALEX. Mr. Lippincot?

THE LIPPINCOT. Miss Benson, is it?

ALEX. That's right. Sit, won't you? (*They seat themselves facing each other, taking each other's measure.*)

THE LIPPINCOT. Thanks,—I gather from Sam you've had a long day of work.

ALEX. It *has* been a long day.

THE LIPPINCOT. It shows a very fine spirit.

ALEX. Don't you think so?

THE LIPPINCOT. In fact, I'm agog at you.

ALEX. Agog is something I've always wanted someone to be at me.

THE LIPPINCOT. He'll be right back: he just went over to telephone.

ALEX. Why? Is the one here broken again?

THE LIPPINCOT. It was a long-distance call.

ALEX. Oh.

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Watching her*) —In reply to a wire about a job.

ALEX. A job, no less!

THE LIPPINCOT. You didn't know about it—

ALEX. No, I can't say I did.

THE LIPPINCOT. Funny: I had a quaint idea you had something to do with it.

ALEX. That's a very quaint idea. Where did you get it?

THE LIPPINCOT. Well, for one thing, the offer came from one Benjamin Platt, Esquire.

ALEX. Mady's father?

THE LIPPINCOT. The same.

ALEX. I've never met him. He's said to be very nice.

THE LIPPINCOT. Oh, I'm sure of it!—So you've never met him?

ALEX. No, I haven't had that pleasure.

THE LIPPINCOT. It's wonderful what a girl's friends will do for her.

ALEX. I always say.

THE LIPPINCOT. Only I'm afraid he must turn the pretty offer down.

ALEX. He has other plans, of course.

THE LIPPINCOT. Definite ones.

ALEX. I know. I've had the privilege of hearing about them any number of times.

THE LIPPINCOTT. —And from what *he* says, you seem to have been quite good about it.

ALEX. From what he says?

THE LIPPINCOT. —It seems you haven't tried to talk him out of them.

ALEX. Why should I?

THE LIPPINCOT. They do, as a rule, when they get so fond of a guy.

ALEX. They?

THE LIPPINCOT. Women.

ALEX. Do you suppose it's possibly because I'm not fond enough?

THE LIPPINCOT. He grants you a better reason: He puts you a cut above your sisters.

ALEX. That's terribly good of him.—I wonder if there's a feminine equivalent to this big new Masculine Freedom idea?

THE LIPPINCOT. Sure there is.

ALEX. I hoped so: but what?

THE LIPPINCOT. The same as it's always been: home and babies.

ALEX. What did you say?

THE LIPPINCOT. You heard me.

ALEX. It's not possible.

THE LIPPINCOT. A home and babies!

ALEX. It's the Middle Ages.

THE LIPPINCOT. Women don't change.

ALEX. So they're our right—our prerogative—the way freedom is yours.

THE LIPPINCOT. Just exactly.

ALEX. And we ought to insist on our right, of course, just as you do.

THE LIPPINCOT. Sure you ought.

ALEX. It's a little hard, with all the men off to Russia.

THE LIPPINCOT. Oh, there'll always be a few goofy guys who'll stick around.

ALEX. —Love has nothing to do with it.

THE LIPPINCOT. It's useful, as a kind of window display.

ALEX. Why, you—! (*But she controls herself*) —Lippincot, you're a fool.

THE LIPPINCOT. Not such a one that I can't see every move you've made—and a few more that you're going to.

ALEX. Moves?

THE LIPPINCOT. Little Innocent.

ALEX. But for what? I'd really like to know.

THE LIPPINCOT. To get him, of course.

ALEX. Oh. (*After a silence*) Would you care to enumerate?

THE LIPPINCOT. The moves?

ALEX. Yes. Name ten.

THE LIPPINCOT. (*He gazes at her for a moment. Then*) Well, having met the boy, you make a deliberate set for him. That's Number One. Then you plant the idea that you're something very quaint and special: not like other girls: really understanding, you know—sympathetic, admiring. You're always on hand when he wants you, and always ready to listen. You pretend to be heart and soul for his ideal of a life for himself while at the same time you're doing all you can to sidetrack him with these offers of jobs at fifty per.—All in the great big hope that when it comes to the actual point of leaving,—Ten—he just won't be able to walk out on such a cozy, warm little set-up.

ALEX. It sounds like quite a campaign.

THE LIPPINCOT. Of course I haven't seen all the minor little thrusts and parries. But I can imagine them.

ALEX. He spoke of your brilliance.

THE LIPPINCOT. It doesn't require much.

ALEX. It all makes a very charming picture, I must say.

THE LIPPINCOT. Frame it! Hang it over the hearth, and call it "Shotgun Wedding—New Model." All that's missing is the baby.

ALEX. I guess, on the whole, you're pretty fairly insulting.

THE LIPPINCOT. No: just honest. (*A silence. Then:*)

ALEX. Tell me: do you think I'll be able to pull it off? (*THE LIPPINCOT smiles.*)

THE LIPPINCOT. Almost, but not quite.

ALEX. That's where *you* come in— (*He waggles at her. She waggles back. SAM re-enters up Left*)—Did you get the job?

SAM. How did you know about it?

THE LIPPINCOT. *I told her.*

SAM. He'd left the office. I'll call him at his house tonight.

THE LIPPINCOT. I don't think it's the kind of work you'd care for, somehow.

SAM. Why not?

THE LIPPINCOT. Mr. Benjamin Platt is Mady Platt's father.

SAM. Mady's father? (THE LIPPINCOTT waggles.) But how do you mean?

ALEX. You know—like you have a mother—or an uncle? (*He stares at her, bewildered.*) Incidentally, don't you think you'd better get going?

SAM. I thought I'd like to say goodbye to you first.

ALEX. You've said it.

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Rises*) I'll wait in the car.

SAM. But what is this?

THE LIPPINCOT. Come on, while you're still able. (*He crosses toward the hall, as KATE and Mady enter*) A thousand pardons, ladies.

MADY. Hell—make it two thousand! (THE LIPPINCOT goes out up Left.)

ALEX. (*To SAM*) Well? Why the delay? You heard your bodyguard, didn't you?

SAM. My what?

ALEX. —Or should I say your Nanny?

SAM. I don't get any of this.

ALEX. Perhaps you aren't very bright.

SAM. Look here, Alex: I can't for the life of me see why you— (*He stops and looks at KATE. KATE looks at Mady. They turn to leave.*)

ALEX. No! Wait! (*They stop. She turns to SAM again*) Why I what?

SAM. Why you're acting like this.

ALEX. Like what?

SAM. Well, the way you are.

ALEX. How's that?

SAM. You know damn well how it is!

ALEX. Now, dear, Mother's keeping her voice low.

SAM. Why you should suddenly get a big hate on, just because The Lippincot might have said something to—

ALEX. Hate? But I admire and venerate you! I admire technique, even if it's only jumping through hoops.

SAM. What hoops?

ALEX. What hoops has he?

SAM. If you think The Lippincot runs *me*, you've got another thought coming!

ALEX. That makes two.

KATE. Listen, my dears—

SAM. No! You keep out of it!

MADY. He means we should keep out.

ALEX. Let the conversation become general.

SAM. My God! Do you think I'm a child?

ALEX. My God, I think you are a child.—The Kiddie-Kar waits, does it not?

SAM. I'm not going to leave you like this, I'm damned if I will!

ALEX. Listen, Sam: About six times now, you've left me, and then somehow turned up again. It's getting to be a trifle wearing. I'm not as good as I was at sustaining the note of farewell. Please do bear in mind that I didn't pick *you* out. You picked me. You came after me, and kept coming. You've disturbed my life, you've disturbed my work, you've disturbed my peace of mind. I've had all I want of it. I'm not the great, free soul that you are. I have a number of obligations and responsibilities that need my what-they-call undivided attention.

SAM. To hell with your responsibilities! To hell with your obligations!

ALEX. On the contrary, to hell with anything that interferes with them! You do. So if you'll be kind enough now to go away and stay away, I shall be

oh so grateful. (*He stares at her. She meets his gaze evenly*) —And this time do please make it definite, will you?

SAM. All right—if that's how you feel about it! (*He moves swiftly to the door*) All I wish to God is, I'd never met you! (*And goes out up Left. ALEX stiffens. MADY exclaims:*)

MADY. Whew!

KATE. But did you notice he somehow omitted to say goodbye?

ALEX. (*Sits immobile, staring in front of her*) Now I've done it, now I've done it—

KATE. You bet you have!

MADY. Probably the first sensible thing since she's known him.

KATE. At last the Little Woman—the littlest woman of them all!

MADY. She'll make the team! She'll make the team!

ALEX. But he's gone! I sent him!

KATE. Listen to her!

MADY. Isn't she *rich*, Bun?

ALEX. But you *heard* me, didn't you? I sent him away! And right this minute he's tearing off toward—

KATE. Oh, no, he's not! (*WARN Curtain.*)

MADY. Oh, no, indeedy!

KATE. Not he!

MADY. Not Mr. Thatchinoff!

SALLY. (*Comes in up Left, hilarious*) But my dears—it's fantastic!

ALEX. (*To KATE and MADY*) I tell you, this very moment he's in that damn little car, bound for—what makes you think he's not?

KATE. Because there's a ticket on the windshield and a cop on the seat!

SALLY. Two cops! Big ones!

ALEX. They aren't hurting him!?

SALLY. Oh, yes.

ALEX. Oh, that's awful!

MADY. Why?

ALEX. But what's it for? What's he done?

KATE. Oh—committed something—a felony or a nuisance, we don't know which.

ALEX. They—they won't go to *jail*!?

MADY. Yes, Bun, they will.

ALEX. Oh, dear, oh, dear—

KATE. Shall we get them right out again for you?

ALEX. (*Glances up at her, about to speak, then settles back into her chair*) —Let them stay awhile.

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE: *The living-room. A few potted palms and two or three more chairs have been added. The curtains are drawn and the lamps lighted.*

TIME: *Nine o'clock Saturday night.*

AT RISE: SALLY and MARY are on the stair-landing, talking down to FRANCES in the room below. ALL are in evening-dress. Occasionally they glance toward the hall to make sure they are not being overheard.

MARY. —You and your Hat!

SALLY. *Is he even your Hat?*

FRANCES. —But he *had* to go over when all the other men did!

SALLY. You shouldn't have let him out of your sight! That was egregious!

FRANCES. How could I have stopped him?

MARY. That was up to you.

SALLY. Ways and means! They exist, don't they?

FRANCES. But I know he couldn't have gone to the jail. He said he'd be back in a minute.

MARY. When was that?

FRANCES. About ten minutes ago.

SALLY. You see?

MARY. You see?

SALLY. —When he comes—if he comes—grapple him to you with hooks of steel!

FRANCES. How?

MADY. Use your ingenuity. We can't teach you everything.

FRANCES. But he promised he wouldn't do anything without telling me.

MADY. Promised!

FRANCES. You don't understand, Mady. A promise is sacred to Hat. He— (*A WHISTLE is heard through the hall, from outside. FRANCES turns triumphantly*) There! Didn't I tell you?

MADY. (*Voice lower*) Keep him here till Kate gets back, if you have to tie him down.

FRANCES. But if he—

MADY. —And keep him away from that telephone!

SALLY. This strain! My nerves are in knots!

(BUCHANAN and BOYD appear in the doorway, BUCHANAN in black trousers and a white dinner-coat and BOYD in white trousers and black dinner-coat.)

FRANCES. Oh, dear! It's only— (*MADY and SALLY stop and turn.*)

MADY. Why! Bless my soul, if it isn't the Brooks Brothers!

BOYD. We got to wondering.

BUCHANAN. We got to feeling like step-children.

SALLY. (*Flings out her arms to him*) My Venetian blond!

MADY. Which is Spic and which is Span?

BOYD. Interchangeable.

FRANCES. They certainly look awfully pretty, I must say. (*BUCHANAN and BOYD beam at each other.*)

BUCHANAN. You hear? (*BOYD goes to FRANCES.*)

BOYD. —Of a discernment. (*And draws her arm through his*) May I ask the lady's name?

FRANCES. F-Frances Fenn.

SALLY. Speak up, dear.

BOYD. I feel strangely drawn to you, Frances.

FRANCES. That's nice.

MADY. Hey, you—I thought you were mine!

FRANCES. (*To BOYD*) Yes—I'm afraid you'll find *I'm* an awfully flat tire.

BOYD. But we fix flats.

BUCHANAN. We maintain a Twenty-four-hour Service.—Come on, Sal-Pal—let's go and live dangerously.

SALLY. I've got to do my face over first. You go and wait.

BUCHANAN. Stranded again. (*HAT comes in up Left, in a dinner-coat, with occasional cuff-trouble, and worried.*)

FRANCES. Hat!

SALLY. At last!

HAT. What's afoot here? (*FRANCES takes her arm from BOYD's.*)

FRANCES. I was only—

BOYD. I can explain everything.

HAT. Don't bother. Just quit snaking, snake.

BOYD. Come on, Buck—I'm frightened again.

BUCHANAN. Yes, we'd better play safe. (*They move toward the hall.*)

SALLY. Buck darling—did you do all I asked?

BUCK. You mean about the Elis? Oh, yes—and more!

MADY. 'At's a stuff!

BOYD. (*To HAT*) We put three towels and a pillow-case in one bag and the thermos-jug and Gideon Bible in the other.

SALLY. Perfection!

FRANCES. (*Simultaneously*) Gracious!

MADY. The Management *never* will understand! (*She draws SALLY off up the stairs*) Go on—we'll

be there! (BUCHANAN and BOYD link arms and move on toward the hall.)

HAT. God! Boarding-school days.

BUCHANAN. (*Taps him smartly on the shoulder as they pass*) Tap! Go to your room!

HAT. (*After them*) —If I had a boy and he wanted to go to Princeton, do you know what I'd do to him? (*They turn in the doorway, smiling aggravatingly.*)

BOYD. What?

HAT. Send him to Princeton. (BUCHANAN and BOYD go out with their same hollow laugh.)

BUCHANAN and BOYD. Haw, haw, haw.

FRANCES. Hat—you were hours!

HAT. Look, Precious. I'm getting worried.

FRANCES. About what?

HAT. The Jailbirds.

FRANCES. Why? Did they—did they telephone again?

HAT. They most certainly did.

FRANCES. Wh—what did you say?

HAT. Just what I did the first time: that I was unable to locate myself.

FRANCES. Hat—you're wonderful!

HAT. I know.—But five hours the wrong side of the bars is enough: these guys are friends of mine.

FRANCES. It's an awfully pretty little building. I'm sure they're all right.

HAT. What makes you think they are? You can't sock a cop with—with impunity. You need something heavier.

FRANCES. Bun.

HAT. By this time they've probably put on the thumb-screws and given 'em the Iron Maiden. I'm going to call the Chief.

FRANCES. Oh, not yet!

HAT. Yes, ma'am—immejut. And I want to get to that dance.

FRANCES. But it hasn't started yet! Wait just till it does. Just for Alex's sake.

HAT. No, ma'am—and Alex is all right—she was a riot at dinner. They practically carried her over on their shoulders.

FRANCES. Wait just five minutes, then.

HAT. (*He shakes his head firmly*) Hat has made up his mind.

FRANCES. Then at least until Kate comes back—

HAT. Why? Where is she?

FRANCES. She went to see Professor Beckett.

HAT. (*Leers*) La!

FRANCES. She had to—she was desperate—Hat, you can certainly wait five tiny minutes—

HAT. (*He pats the hand on his arm*) You touch me, little Pear-blossom—but I must return to my regiment.

FRANCES. When you've been such an angel so far!

HAT. And what has it got me?—A slight pressure of the hand. No, my dear: Friendship is more beautiful than love. (*He moves toward the telephone*)—Though love, in some aspects, is indeed beautiful.

FRANCES. But you *can't* call the jail from *here*!

HAT. O.K.—the Inn, then.

FRANCES. (*She sinks down upon the sofa*) Hat—(*He stops and turns inquiringly*) Save me the neck? (*They gaze at each other. Finally:*)

HAT. O, thou with the eyes of a dove— (*He moves to the sofa and seats himself next to her*)—You are quelque chose tonight, Francesca, you are distinctly quelque chose.—Place your hand in mine.

FRANCES. (*Gingerly she does so*) Like this?

HAT. (*Gazes at her soulfully*) Do I frighten you?

FRANCES. A—a little.

HAT. (*Looming*) The nicest thing about you is a sort of a kind of a sweetness or something. (*FRANCES does her eye exercises. He launches into an in-*

vocation:) —Angels, twang your harps, enchanting maidens lift your voices, let future generations rejoice, let the band play, for her rebuffs have been turned into plowshares and— (*He turns her head about, facing him*) —you know something?

FRANCES. What, Hat?

HAT. You have that in your face, which. (*He looms closer.*)

FRANCES. Which what?

HAT. —Which *without* which, nothing. And you know something else? (*She looks up inquiringly*) I can't look at you without wanting to kiss you. (*A moment. Then:*)

FRANCES. Sa—save me the neck? (*An embrace. Then she averts her head*) Hat—really—this isn't at all a good place for a thicket.

HAT. Lady, with me in office, grass will grow in the streets. (*Another embrace. Finally she moves from him.*)

FRANCES. You're terrible. You're just simply terrible.

HAT. (*With satisfaction*) So they say. So they do say.

FRANCES. (*Sighs contentedly and leans her head back against his shoulder, gazing at the ceiling*) Ceilings are so vacant, aren't they?

HAT. They'd look funny populated.

(*MADY and SALLY appear on the upper stair landing. SALLY peers down at them. FRANCES sees them.*)

FRANCES. Oh!

SALLY. —But idyllic!

FRANCES. Why! (*She moves away from HAT as they come down the stairs.*)

MADY. Don't mind us. We're only the wind in the trees.

SALLY. (*To FRANCES*) My dear, you look a sight! Was it a deuce-set?—Did you contest every point, my dear?

FRANCES. (*Moves toward the mirror*) Don't be so fresh.—What's happened to Kate, do you think?

MADY. She'll be coming.

HAT. (*Moves toward the door up Left*) And Hat will be going.

MADY. (*Stands in his path*) Where to?

HAT. To telephone. (*MADY and SALLY exchange glances.*)

SALLY. Oh, Hat—Buck Buchanan said something very odd about you at dinner.

HAT. (*Turns belligerently*) What do you mean?

SALLY. —That you claim you can tap-dance. Is it true?

HAT. Of course it's true.

MADY. They all say they can tap nowadays.

HAT. They do, do they? (*He struts in the direction of the door, tapping lightly.*)

FRANCES. Hat! You never told me! (*He turns, pleased.*)

HAT. You like?

FRANCES. (*In a breath*) Beautiful!

HAT. (*He executes a lank, loose-limbed shuffle up to SALLY*) My secondary male characteristics—you admire?

SALLY. I amaze!

HAT. (*He taps up to MADY*) Now what say'st thou?

MADY. Fair.

HAT. —Of course I'm no Bill Robinson.

SALLY. (*In extenuation*) I know, but you're white.

HAT. (*Another turn*) —Peculiarly gifted, and yet so handsome. (*The TELEPHONE rings. MADY goes to it.*)

MADY. Hello?—Who? (*She glances quickly at*

HAT) No, he's not here.—No, I've no idea. You'd better try the Inn. (*And hangs up.*)

HAT. (*Still dancing*) Who was that for?

MADY. How should I know? (*Glancing at his feet*)
—That's better.

FRANCES. It's perfection!

MADY. How does your right foot know what your left foot's doing?

HAT. They grew up together—went away to different schools together.

KATE. (*Comes in up Left*) Hat! Stop that!

HAT. What for?

KATE. Isn't it time you did something about those poor boys?

HAT. (*Stops dancing*) —The words right out of my mouth.

KATE. A fine friend you are.

HAT. I don't get you. Wasn't it you, who—?

KATE. Go on! Quick! Heaven knows the state they must be in. (*HAT stares at her.*) Have you no feelings at all?

HAT. (*Turns and moves toward the hall*) Women are too complicated. I'm going to get me another hobby. (*He goes out. KATE sinks into a chair. The GIRLS crowd around her.*)

MADY. Kate! You're sure it's all right for him to?

KATE. We can't keep them locked up forever, can we? Oh—that marvelous man!

FRANCES. Who? Mr. Beckett?

KATE. Of course!—Alex hasn't come back yet?

SALLY. She's giddy as a wren, my dear! It's obscene. She's exalted.

KATE. If only she stays that way.—Has everything been done? Did you tip off the Management at the Inn, Mady?

MADY. No, but I will the moment I get there.

KATE. —And Sally—have you—?

SALLY. No, but it won't take me a minute to pack one. I'm going right back upstairs.

KATE. (*Turns and scrutinizes FRANCES*) I guess you've done *your* duty all right, Fran.

FRANCES. (*Pats her hair into place*) It was plent.

MADY. But actually, Bun—once Sam's loose again—

SALLY. Yes! What's to prevent him from lighting right out—in the death-car—with ribbons?

KATE. Beckett said it was ten to one he'd come back again.

MADY. What if he's wrong?

SALLY. Yes! What makes him think so? What does he base it on?

KATE. The evidence in hand.

SALLY. Don't tell me you acquainted him with all the grim facts, my dear!

KATE. I had to.

FRANCES. Kate!

SALLY. Did he swoon on the sofa?

KATE. No. He just seemed amused.

MADY. Amused—I like that!

KATE. He demands one thing: implicit confidence.

MADY. What?

KATE. —And I assure you he's got mine.

SALLY. I don't trust that Beckett. *I* think he's light-minded. Look what he did to me the first time I met him—

FRANCES. I hope he really does know how people work.

KATE. If he doesn't, we're cooked.

MADY. But what will he actually do, Bun? How proceed?

KATE. I don't know. We've just got to have confidence.

SALLY. My bet is he'll perform some kind of gruesome experiment: try one gruelling thing after an-

other, like in Lab. (*A sudden wail*) —But I've suddenly got the most horrible feeling, my dears!

KATE. Don't *do* that, Sally!

FRANCES. What about?

SALLY. We've been entirely misguided—we've made a simply ghastly mistake!

MADY. What? Why?

SALLY. You can't set a man to catch a man—it's insane!

KATE. It's not!

SALLY. I tell you we might as well crawl to the nearest asylum and give ourselves up!

KATE. Stop this, everyone! Is this confidence? Is it— (*She stops, as MISS RITCHIE comes in from the sitting-room up Right.*)

MISS RITCHIE. What! Not still here!—Really, I don't know what you are thinking of. You go to all the trouble and pains to plan this party, and then you huddle together in a little group and do nothing whatever about it.

FRANCES. We were only—

MISS RITCHIE. What's the matter with you? You look as if you'd had the fright of your lives.

MADY. It was that goose at dinner.

MISS RITCHIE. The dinner was very good. I doubt if any of the other Houses did their guests quite so well. Hasn't the dance begun?

KATE. Not yet. We'd have heard it.

MISS RITCHIE. Well, begin it will, and directly. You must come at once, all of you. Gather them up, Kate.

KATE. Yes, Miss Ritchie. (*MISS RITCHIE goes out into the hall.*) We'd better. We can duck back again when we like.—And we simply can't get into a panic now—understand? We've got to *believe*!

SALLY. Yes—we can only hope that Herr Professor Beckett is of an intelligence, of an imagination practically Olympian.

KATE. We can more than hope—he is! He's the most marvelous—the most knowing—the most brilliant—just about the—! (*She stops, as SALLY and MADY turn and regard her curiously*) I mean to say, he—

SALLY. Smit! My God—another of us!

KATE. Don't be a fool. I only meant—

SALLY. But my dear—the blush actually mantles the cheek!

KATE. It does not! I simply think he—

MADY. Say it, why don't you? (*She takes FRANCES' hand and draws her toward the hall*) Come on, Franny child.

KATE. (*After them*) Say what?

MADY. A plus B squared equals A square plus— (*She stops suddenly and stares out the door up Left*) Kate!

KATE. What?

SALLY. Already? It's not!

MADY. (*Turns and drags FRANCES to the sitting-room door up Right*) But it is, but it is! Scoot, you two! (*KATE and SALLY fly up the stairs. The DOORBELL rings.*)

SALLY. Victory within the grasp!

KATE. Didn't I tell you—didn't I tell you?

SALLY. Now we can relax, and throw ourselves into things! (*They exit into sitting-room.*)

(*For a moment the living-room is empty, then from the hall SAM enters, THE LIPPINCOT, hat on head, behind him. One of SAM's hands is lightly bandaged, and THE LIPPINCOT's cheek is discolored by a bruise. SAM sinks down into a chair and holds his head in his hands. THE LIPPINCOT regards him contemptuously.*)

THE LIPPINCOT. Back again.—Now you're really

finished. Now they haul you out of the basket and lay you right on the slab.

SAM. Please—for God's sake—just wait in the car just five minutes.

THE LIPPINCOTT. I don't even know if I could identify you.

SAM. Will you please—just for—! —But I tell you this is a personal matter!

THE LIPPINCOTT. It's the damndest conspiracy I ever heard of. What do you suppose I came up here for, except to save you from this flock of harpies?

SAM. All I ask is five minutes—

THE LIPPINCOT. They'll tear you limb from limb. They'll have your heart out, and—

SAM. What's five minutes out of a lifetime?

THE LIPPINCOT. —But this can go on forever!

SAM. All I ask is—the simple fact is—

THE LIPPINCOT. You're making one too many of these farewell tours, my boy.

SAM. Will you please let me see her just for one moment *alone*?

THE LIPPINCOT. Well, for your sake, I'd certainly like to get it over with.

MILDRED. (*Comes into the hall-doorway*) Was it you rang the front doorbell?

SAM. Yes. Where's Miss Benson?

MILDRED. Why, Mr. Thatcher! Whatever has happened to you?

SAM. Jail. Where is she?

MILDRED. Jail!

SAM. I say, where is she!?

MILDRED. Gone to the dance. I guess they all have. —Well, well—jail.

SAM. Go over and tell her I'm here, will you please?

MILDRED. —Oh, but I couldn't, not possibly.

THE LIPPINCOT. Why not? Where's the hardship?

MILDRED. (*Looks down at her apron*) Look at me.

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Suddenly THE LIPPINCOTT goes to her, turns her around and whips off her apron*) The fairest maiden of the village! (*He waves the apron at her*) Now go on! Hurry up!

MILDRED. You give me my apron!

THE LIPPINCOT. —When you get **back**, Fair Charmer—and something in the pocket!

MILDRED. (*Draws a deep breath and turns to the hall*) If it isn't one thing, it's another— (*And goes out up Left. Again THE LIPPINCOT turns to SAM.*)

THE LIPPINCOT. Every best wish. Parting is such sweet sorrow.

SAM. Oh, be still.

THE LIPPINCOT. Hello, goodbye. Goodbye, hello. Sure you want to risk it, are you?

SAM. Don't you think I've got a mind of my own?

THE LIPPINCOT. Not any more. I think you traded it in for a dishrag.

SAM. You don't seem to realize *I'm* giving up something to go on this trip. You're giving up nothing. I did a lot of thinking, there in that rotten little cell today.

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Waves the apron at him*) What you did was to flap a dishrag. (*Suddenly he stares at him in wide-eyed wonder*) My God!

SAM. Now what?

THE LIPPINCOT. Do you know what's the matter with you?

SAM. Nothing is.—What?

THE LIPPINCOT. *You're in love!*

SAM. The—the hell I am!

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Compassionately*) Why, you poor miserable guy—

SAM. I tell you I'm—!

THE LIPPINCOT. —Right up to the ears.

SAM. No, you fool! That's a lot of—

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Stuffs the apron in his pocket and goes to him*) Now don't you see? (*He bends over him*) I tell you there's one thing to do and just one: grab that car quick and beat it to hell and gone out of here.

SAM. No! I won't! Not before I—!

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Squats beside SAM's chair; touches his arm*) We'd better slide out the back way, old boy.

SAM. Go any way you like! I'll follow you after I see her.

THE LIPPINCOT. You think you can take it, do you?

SAM. I know I can!

THE LIPPINCOT. (*Studies him pityingly*) Don't you want a little drink first?

SAM. No.

THE LIPPINCOT. Or a little something to eat, maybe?

SAM. No!

THE LIPPINCOT. But, Baby, you aren't well, you know. And—

SAM. Listen: will you, for cat's sake, get out and just simply let me say goodbye to her! Then I'll—

KATE. (*Comes down the stairs*) Sam! But I thought by this time you'd be— Oh! Did you have an accident?

SAM. Not exactly.

THE LIPPINCOT. Just a little run-in with your friends, the Police.

KATE. My friends?

THE LIPPINCOT. Aren't they?

KATE. I'd like to think so.—Alex will be so surprised. She ought to be back in a minute. I think she has some sort of a date here.

SALLY. (*Comes down the stairs carrying a small traveling-bag*) Some fiend in human form has absconded with my tortoise-shell comb. I had to take—

(*She peers over the stair-railing at SAM and THE LIPPINCOT*) I don't believe it! I refuse to concede that it's possible! (*She leaves the bag on the bottom stair-landing, claps on her glasses and comes up to them*) My dears—you simply can't appear at the dance in this state!

THE LIPPINCOT. Who's going to any dance?

KATE. They're fresh from jail, Sally.

SALLY. Jail!

SAM. Oh, let's not romanticize it.

SALLY. But you don't mean it! Such an indignity! (*To THE LIPPINCOT*) How was the food?

THE LIPPINCOT. There wasn't any.

SALLY. (*Waggles at him*) What! Not a noodle?—But you must be starving!—We shall minister unto you!—The pantry's teeming.

THE LIPPINCOT. No, thanks. (*SALLY deftly snatches his hat from his head and backs away with it. He rises*) Give me that hat! (*She dangles it before him tantalizingly, drawing him with it to the door up Left.*)

SALLY. But I insist! It's only hospitable! It's only Christian! We have a sinking-fund just for the purpose! (*They got out up Left.*)

SAM. (*To KATE*) Who is Alex's date with?

KATE. Why—er—why? Why do you ask?

SAM. I just wondered, that's all.

KATE. I—er—maybe it isn't important. I'm sure she'll—I know she'll want to see you.

SAM. Who did she go to the dance with?

KATE. (*Laughs*)—About ten of them! She—

ALEX. (*Comes in up Left in full sail*) Mildred said Sam was—Sammy! (*She laughs and goes to him; turns him around and looks at him*) But you don't look so badly damaged!

SAM. I'm not.

ALEX. (*She touches the bandaged hand*) Does it hurt?

SAM. No.

ALEX. I do a nice little bandaging job.

SAM. It's all right, thanks.

ALEX. Actually jail, Sam?

SAM. For a while.

ALEX. (*Laughs*) Was it fun?

SAM. Not particularly.

ALEX. But didn't you have a comfortable cell? Didn't you find a little mouse-friend to feed chocolate to?

SAM. No—both times.

ALEX. I don't know what our jails are coming to.

SALLY. (*Comes in again*) Alex?—You never looked cuter!—But circulate, my dear, circulate! It's going to start any minute! Wasn't dinner an evil dream?

ALEX. No! I loved it!

KATE. Where's Two-gun Lippincot? (*SALLY whispers something to KATE, who nods with satisfaction. SALLY moves to the hall.*)

SALLY. —I'm going over! I feel simply resplendent! (*She goes out up Left.*)

ALEX. (*To SAM*) You're sure you can't wait for the dance? There's a Harvard man there in day-clothes.

SAM. No. I've got to leave.

ALEX. You're really just the leavingest one, Sam.

SAM. There are a couple of things I'd like to tell you—

KATE. Shall I go?

ALEX. Heavens, no! This won't take a minute.—Well, Sam? Such as?

SAM. I'm sorry I lost my temper this afternoon.

ALEX. You looked very handsome.

SAM. You said some pretty tough things yourself, you know.

ALEX. I was horrid: The Lippincot made me mad.

SAM. The Lippincot doesn't understand women.

ALEX. (*Smiles and pats his arm*) —But you do, don't you? So it's all right.

(BECKETT comes swiftly in from the hall.)

SAM. Oh, for the love of—!

BECKETT. Alex! Did you think I was never coming? (ALEX turns wonderingly. He puts his hand on her shoulder and propels her toward the hall) Come out here, my dear—it's less congested. Everything's arranged. Forget about Thursday at five. I'll tell you the plan— (*They go out, ALEX dumbfounded.*)

SAM. Is he—? Who is he?

KATE. (*At the mirror*) Professor Walter Beckett, of the Science Department.

SAM. Who does he think he is?

KATE. Why—I guess Professor Walter Beckett, of the Science Department.

SAM. Where does he get this stuff?

KATE. What stuff?

SAM. Shoving Alex around like that.

KATE. I didn't notice any shoving.

SAM. (*Suddenly he seizes KATE by the shoulders*) Listen, Kate—

KATE. Now who's shoving?

SAM. Listen: I've got to go—and before I do I've got to talk to her. Go out and get her!

KATE. How can I?

SAM. Just walk up to them.

KATE. But what about him?

SAM. You take care of him—take care of everyone for just about five minutes!

KATE. Then will you absolutely, positively, definitely go for good?

SAM. Yes.

KATE. (*Moves to the hall*) Remember—it's a promise! (*And encounters MILDRED in the doorway.*)

MILDRED. Where's that Mr. Fresh with my apron?
(KATE *whispers something to her*. SAM *exclaims to himself*.)

SAM. God!

MILDRED. But how'll I get my dishes done?

KATE. It won't be long! (*She goes out up Left.*

MILDRED *moves muttering to the door, glaring at SAM.*)

MILDRED. —Always something. Little cut-ups, little monkey-shiners, little— (*And bangs her way out up Left. FRANCES appears in the hall doorway.*)

FRANCES. Have you seen Hat anywhere?

SAM. (*Wheels about on her*) Listen—! (*Then*) —He went over to the dance.

FRANCES. But I can't find him anywhere. (*Entering*) I guess I'll just squattez-vous here, and—

SAM. (*Confronts her furiously*) You'll just clear out of here, that's what you'll do!

FRANCES. —I beg your pardon?

SAM. You heard me: clear out!

FRANCES. But what right have you to—?

SAM. Never mind that! Out! (*He backs her into the hall again.*)

FRANCES. Why! I think you're perfectly—

SAM. —And *stay out*! Understand? (*He re-enters, again exclaiming*.) God! (*A moment, then ALEX comes in from the hall, humming a tune.*)

ALEX. What's it all about, Sammy? (*And continues her humming.*)

SAM. It's simply that I should like to— Would you mind stopping that?

ALEX. What?

SAM. That damned humming.

ALEX. But it's a tune I'm just learning, and I'm afraid I'll forget it.

SAM. That would be just tough. (*She looks at him.*)

ALEX. I'm also afraid I'm in too good a mood to resume hostilities—

SAM. "Gay, dancing fool that I am"—eh?

ALEX. That's it! (*Then*) Look, Sam—won't you?

SAM. Won't I what?

ALEX. Come with me, come to the ball?

SAM. I *can't*, Alex.

ALEX. But it would be *so* easy! (*She comes up to him; coaxes him*) —Did you ever have the feelin' that you wanted for to go—and at the same time you wanted for to stay?

SAM. Alex, I've *got* to go.

ALEX. (*She leaves him, with a large gesture*) Then goodbye, Sam! Adieu, mon brave! (*She resumes her humming.*)

SAM. So you're going to be this way again.

ALEX. —I'm sorry. I forgot.

SAM. Alex, please come here. (*She moves to him.*) Alex, I—!—if only I could be sure you understood how—how—

ALEX. (*Quietly, after a moment*) Say what you want to say, Sam.

SAM. I—I guess I don't express myself very well—

ALEX. Never mind that.

SAM. I—I just don't want to go—I just *can't* go—without being sure you understand how it is with a man—

ALEX. How, dear Sam?

SAM. —How he—you know—how he gets a feeling that he's cut out for a certain kind of life—to do a certain kind of thing a certain way and—what I mean is—you know—all sorts of things keep coming along to—well—to steer you off your course, and—

ALEX. Things like me?

SAM. There aren't all sorts of things like you. There's only one.

ALEX. Thanks, Bun. Thanks for that.—And I really do understand. I understand like anything.

SAM. Anyhow, Alex—

ALEX. Anyhow, Sam.

SAM. We've just got to be realists, you know.

ALEX. Yes, Sam.

SAM. I'd like to feel you hadn't ever forgotten me, though.

ALEX. You can feel that, Bun. Just you go right ahead.

SAM. I hope you'll always remember me the way I'll remember you.

ALEX. How is that?

SAM. Well—just "Sam and Alex," I guess.

ALEX. It'll only be a little different for me—

SAM. How?

ALEX. "Alex and Sam"—

SAM. Darling.

ALEX. (*Quizzically*) —Darling.

SAM. Will you write to me?

ALEX. If you like.

SAM. When I get to Seattle, I'm going to work out a kind of an itinerary. I'll shoot it along to you.

ALEX. Do that.

SAM. You see, I—simply wanted to be sure before I left that everything was—you know—all understood and right between us.

ALEX. Everything is.

SAM. Absolutely settled?

ALEX. Absolutely.

SAM. Well, with that early start ahead, I guess I'd better be pushing off.

ALEX. Yes, I guess.

SAM. —Everything's all right, then.

ALEX. Everything.—You don't want to get married, on *any* account. And I don't want to be the Spirit of the Embroidered Towel and the Bridge Lunch, either.

SAM. Naturally you don't.

ALEX. Free's what you want to be—free as air!
Why not? It's—it's a man's prerogative.

SAM. I always thought it was.

ALEX. You were right.—So you just fare forth
and exercise it—and I stay at home, and I guess
eventually exercise mine.

SAM. (*After a moment*) Your job, you mean.

ALEX. I mean my prerogative. Girls have one too,
you know.

SAM. Have they?

ALEX. Of course they have.

SAM. What is it?

ALEX. Oh—home and babies.

SAM. Alex, of all the goofy—

ALEX. —Every girl's right! I don't scoff at you and
your rights, do I?

SAM. Of course, if you should fall in love with
someone—

ALEX. Thanks—but that's something I expect
never to do again—not if I can help it, and I sort of
think I can.

SAM. Then how can you talk about a home and so
forth?

ALEX. Easy: love or no love, a girl must have her
rights.

SAM. You couldn't.

ALEX. Why not?

SAM. You're too honest.

ALEX. Can't I be honest and still—?

SAM. No! That's the only thing I'd be afraid of
about you—your doing some damn fool, romantic
thing like that.

ALEX. What would you like me to do? Sit and pine
away like Marianna on the Moated Grange?

SAM. Of course not. But—

ALEX. (*Looks at him intently*) —Or *would* you?
(*Then suddenly*) Sam! That really is what you'd

like! Oh, you're funny! You are, funny! You are, you are, you are!

SAM. Listen! You know as well as I do that—

ALEX. Go away, Funny—go away, go away!

(BECKETT and KATE come in from the sitting-room.)

SAM. But I never said I—!

ALEX. Go away!

BECKETT. (*Advances, smiling pleasantly*) Who is the young man, Alex?

ALEX. I—he—a funny friend—very funny—

KATE. Professor Beckett—Mr. Thatcher.

BECKETT. How do you do?

SAM. How are you?

BECKETT. In rude health, thanks. And you?

SAM. Never better.

BECKETT. The wish seems to be that you should move on somewhere.

SAM. Well? What about it?

BECKETT. Exactly! What about it? How does he happen to be here, Alex?

ALEX. He just dropped in to say goodbye.

SAM. How do you like it?

BECKETT. Not very much.

SAM. Too bad.

BECKETT. This is tiresome, Alex. Let's get along.

SAM. Wait a minute.

BECKETT. What for?

SAM. Miss Benson and I were having a private conversation.

BECKETT. But it happens that Miss Benson has an appointment with me.

SAM. Maybe Miss Benson will break the appointment.

BECKETT. (*Laughs*) This one? I doubt it! On the contrary, I think she— (*Suddenly his face becomes serious.*) Kate—

KATE. Yes? •

BECKETT. Is this by any chance the young man you told me about?

KATE. Why—yes. Yes, it is.

BECKETT. (*Turns and grasps SAM's hand warmly*) Mr. Thatcher, I beg your pardon. I am sincerely sorry. I have an enormous admiration for you. I think what you are doing shows great courage and imagination.

SAM. What are you getting at?

BECKETT. —To sacrifice everything in the pursuit of an ideal! I thought young men had stopped doing that. I thought in your generation romance was dead.

SAM. Romance?

BECKETT. What could be more so?—I did the same thing at your age—burned my bridges and went off to Europe for two years with Jack Woodhull. He is now curator of the Worcester Museum.

SAM. Maybe you didn't stay long enough.

BECKETT. (*Laughs with great appreciation of this sally*) Maybe not! But we wanted our fling, and we had it!

SAM. Only for me, it's not just a fling.

BECKETT. Of course not! And don't let anyone tell you it is! (*He claps SAM on the back.*) And don't you let anyone stop you! Take my advice, my boy, and get going right now!

SAM. You seem to be in quite a hurry about it.

BECKETT. I know too well the obstacles real life puts in the way of the true Romantic. In my case, there was also a— (*He nudges him cozily.*) But don't you worry. There's always another girl later on. (*He gazes fondly at ALEX.*) You'll find that out. And you'll also find that there is a relationship between mature minds that—

SAM. (*Confronts him furiously*) I heard all about your Svengali stuff yesterday! You try to pull any

of that funny business with Alex and you'll hear from me! Understand?

BECKETT. (*Smiles aggravatingly*) How? By letter? By cable? You'll be quite far away, won't you?

SAM. Never mind where I'll be!

BECKETT. I'm afraid I don't in the least. (*Again he turns to ALEX*) Alex, if we're to make Eppsville by ten o'clock—

ALEX. Where?

SAM. (*A cry*) Eppsville!

BECKETT. (*Hand goes to his mouth*) Oh, Lord—(*Then*) Sorry, Alex. (*ALEX is watching SAM, fascinated.*)

SAM. (*Seizes BECKETT by the shoulder and whirls him about, facing him*) Are you trying to kid me? Do you think you can make me believe Alex is seriously thinking of—? Oh, I know a girl can be a fool about a lot of things, but—

BECKETT. Not Alex.

SAM. All women are fools! Alex particularly!

KATE. I think I resent this.

SAM. (*Turns on her*) The damndest fools in the world! They get to feeling sorry for someone—or for themselves—or get some half-baked idea about a home and babies and so forth, and before they know it they're—(*To BECKETT*) Then why didn't you do it before? You've known her long enough, haven't you?

BECKETT. Four years to your four weeks!

SAM. Then why did you wait?

BECKETT. (*A moment. BECKETT's face sets. To ALEX*) Shall I tell him?

ALEX. Tell him what?

BECKETT. Shall I, Kate?

KATE. (*Uncertainly*) If—if you feel you ought.

BECKETT. You think it would be kinder?

KATE. P-possibly.

BECKETT. (*Looks back to SAM, speaking slowly*) Well, then—because I learned it only yesterday.

SAM. Learned it? Learned what?

BECKETT. (*Grasps his arm*) Have courage, my boy—

SAM. Learned what, I say!

BECKETT. That I am soon to become a father.

SAM. What are you talking about?!

BECKETT. The father of a child—her child—our child.

SAM. Why, you! (*ALEX's and KATE's faces are suddenly appalled. ALEX sinks down upon the bottom stair.*)

SAM. Alex—tell him he lies!

ALEX. (*Gulps*) He— He—

KATE. (*Simultaneously*) Mr. Beckett—!

BECKETT. (*He wheels upon her; barks at her.*) You were here when she told me, weren't you?

KATE. I know, but—

BECKETT. You heard her, didn't you?

KATE. Yes—but you know perfectly well that—

BECKETT. And what did you say?—That you were knitting a little sweater for it!

KATE. I—what I said was that I—

SAM. (*Drags BECKETT up to him*) Where do you live?

BECKETT. Why do you ask?

SAM. I say where do you *live*?

BECKETT. Ninety-four Linden Street.

SAM. (*Thrusts him away from him*) Go there and wait for me.

BECKETT. (*Arranges his coat*) I shall do nothing of the sort. I'll be in the car, Alex. Try to quiet him. Try to explain. (*He moves to the hall.*) Fatherhood—there is nothing, nothing in the world to equal it! My privilege! My crown! (*He goes out.*)

SAM. (*Moves swiftly to ALEX and stands over her*) Go and get your things.

ALEX. What—what for?

SAM. I say, get your things!

KATE. Sam—

SAM. You keep out of it! Do you think I'm going to let her tie herself up for life to a skunk like that, just because of one misstep made before she ever knew me?

ALEX. (*Rising*) You believe it—

SAM. Never mind if I do or not! Just get your things!

ALEX. You're out of your mind! You're—

SAM. Then come along without them.

ALEX. Where to?

SAM. Eppsville.

ALEX. Epps—? (*To KATE*) Is he crazy, or am I?

KATE. Don't listen to him! This is just what I tried to avoid!

SAM. She will too listen! Listen! You can get back Monday, and I'll go back too and finish up, and then we'll start out in the Ford. The two of us—Lippincot in the rumble if he wants to come—but I don't think he—well, what are you staring at?

ALEX. The noblest Roman of them all.

SAM. Nothing of the sort! I love the hell out of you, and I want to marry you.

ALEX. And I'll never forget it, Sam—and I'll always love you for it. But you see, what Beckett meant was—

SAM. I'll take care of him!

ALEX. But you fool! Will you let me say—?

SAM. There's no need ever to refer to him again.

ALEX. But I'm trying to *tell* you! I—I—

SAM. Damn it! I know you don't love him! It's me you love. So come along.

ALEX. (*Beats his chest furiously*) Will you listen to me!—The child—it's upstairs now—on my desk—with a rubber band around it!

SAM. With a—? (*He stares. She shakes him.*)

ALEX. Fool—fool! It's my brain-child—my thesis! (*He draws a long, painful breath. His head sinks.*) Oh, Sam—I'm so sorry. I'm terribly sorry. I never dreamed—

SAM. I'll kill you. I'll break every bone in your body.

ALEX. (*Clings to him*) You have already! You're so good, you're so sweet!

SAM. Oh, be still, will you?

ALEX. I guess anyone in any kind of trouble could count on you, Sam.

SAM. (*Agonized*) Shut up, I tell you! Haven't you dragged me through enough knot-holes yet—put me through wringers enough, for cat's sake? You've stood me on my ear and spun me round till I'm dizzy. You've balled up my entire life—you've completely wrecked every plan I ever—

ALEX. Oh, Sam—

SAM. Don't say you haven't—you have, damn your eyes! (*A moment*) So come on, will you?

ALEX. (*Gazes in surprise*) What?

SAM. You heard me—come along!

ALEX. (*She looks up at him wonderingly.*) But you don't have to now.

SAM. Listen, must I—? !

ALEX. We'd be different, Sam—we *would* be different!—But you know you don't want to get married!

SAM. Of course I don't! But what can I do?

ALEX. Get out! Quick! This is an awful place!

SAM. I wouldn't get very far.

ALEX. But you were right! You were right! You were right about everything!

SAM. Don't argue. I—

ALEX. I will too argue! I see what's gone on now! (*MADY comes in from the sitting-room.*) It was an out-and-out campaign! They just set out to get you! Didn't you, Kate?

KATE. (*Incredulously*) To get him!

ALEX. You know you did!

SAM. They all plotted and schemed and—didn't you, Mady?

MADY. For what? This unhappy fate? Don't be crazy!

SAM. Your mates never influenced me one way or the other. Get your things. (*Dance MUSIC begins in the distance across the street.*)

MADY. Listen! The dance! It's beginning!

ALEX. Kate—Mady—what can I do?

KATE. Run! Run like hell.

MADY. Lock yourself in your room!

SAM. Get them! Don't take all night!

ALEX. You run, Sam—run while you can!

SAM. Are you coming, or aren't you?

ALEX. No! (*She catches his hand to her lips and kisses it.*) Goodbye, darling! (*She flies up the stairs.*)

SAM. Goodbye, your foot! (*He rushes after her.*)

MADY. Don't you touch that bag! (*SAM seizes ALEX.*)

ALEX. You'll hate me! You'll never forgive me! (*He drags her down the stairs again.*)

SAM. Come on! Here we go!

MADY. It's Sally's bag! Don't you dare! (*SAM picks up the bag. MADY, shouting*) I ran the car around back! Don't tell him, Alex! (*SAM turns, dragging ALEX with him. FRANCES comes in from the sitting-room.*)

ALEX. (*Now in tears*) No—I can't let you do this! I'd never forgive myself! You were right, you were right. I know you were right! (*His arms tighten around her.*) No, no! I won't! You were driven into it! I will not! (*They are gone—out up Left. MADY and KATE call together.*)

MADY and KATE. Goodbye, Bun! Goodbye!

FRANCES. Plent.

ALEX'S VOICE. (*Is carried back to them at an in-*

creasing distance) But he mustn't! I won't let him!

SALLY. (*Sails in, BECKETT following*) Honestly, to hear this man go on, you'd think women were—Where's Alex?

KATE. She's made the team!

SALLY. It's not true! (*WARN Curtain.*)

MADY. She's made it! She's made the team!

BECKETT. (*Very pleased with himself*) You see? The simplest way is always the most scientific. I was sure that— (*SALLY and MADY prance up to him, hand in hand, singing.*)

SALLY and MADY. "Walter, Walter Wild-Flower, growing up so high! We are all young ladies, and soon about to die!"

BECKETT. Now, girls! None of this! Don't waste your blandishments on—

KATE. (*Pulls SALLY and MADY away from him*) Stop that! He's mine! (*And confronts him, eyes shining*) Wonderful Walter! You were the most—! (*But the smile has left his face and alarm replaces it. He slides toward the hall.*)

BECKETT. Excuse me! I see it's every man for himself! (*He slides out, passing THE LIPPINCOT, raging in.*)

THE LIPPINCOT. Who locked that pantry door? (*Turning*) Sam! (*Then*) Where is he?!

MADY. No spik Inglis.

THE LIPPINCOT. You mean to say they've—?!

FRANCES. Isn't it plent?

THE LIPPINCOT. It's a crime! Where's the telephone? I'll stop it. I'll—! (*But the GIRLS have formed a cordon around him.*) This damned institution ought to be burned to the ground! (*But whichever way he turns he is confronted by another girl, triumphant and laughing.*) Get away, Push-face—

KATE. Will you dance? (*He turns another way.*)

FRANCES. Will you dance with me? (*And another way.*)

MADY. Will you dance with me? (*Then desperately toward the hall door, which SALLY blocks.*)

SALLY. Will you dance? (*Now the GIRLS are dancing around him.*)

CURTAIN

SPRING DANCE

PUBLICITY THROUGH YOUR LOCAL PAPERS

The press can be an immense help in giving publicity to your productions. In the belief that the best reviews from the New York and other large papers are always interesting to local audiences, and in order to assist you, we are printing below several excerpts from those reviews.

“—happily composed and brightly spoken sentences— Undeniably nice, pink and clean—so, go ahead and rejoice.”—*New York American*.

“—much of it is swell, bearing the same imprint as ‘Holiday’ and tossing off dialogue that cannot be beaten in the land— You are bound to receive an evening of supreme importance in the theatre.”—*New York Times*.

“—Mr. Barry, who has written magical dialogue— Prettily touching—”—*New York Sun*.

“—skittishly collegiate, full of slacks, light banter and roll-over acting—the glib brightness of Barry’s usual imprint—”—*New York Evening Journal*.

“Clever play on younger generation.”—*New York World-Telegram*.

“If the rest of the season follows the bright pattern of ‘Spring Dance’, which danced across the dignified stage of the Empire last night, we are in for a fine old time— Gave its audience a delightful two hours.”—*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.

"—a gay little comedy of college romance—a highly entertaining exhibit with sentimental problems—amusing situations—new dialogue that sparkles—"—*Brooklyn Times*.

"—spasms of merriment—pleasant dialogue and brisk repartee."—*New York Mirror*.

"Sounded like a good opening for the new season—well suited to the college trade. Flashes of the Barry who wrote 'Paris Bound'.

"There is much that is gay and light and amusing in 'Spring Dance'—dialogue in Mr. Barry's best manner."—*New York Herald-Tribune*.

SPRING DANCE
PROPERTY PLOT
ACT ONE

1. Cigarettes and book matches (HATTON).
2. Leica camera (LIPPINCOT).
3. Pad and pencil for memos, telephone table, Stage Left.
4. Three sets assorted used college notebooks and textbooks (the textbooks must not be too thick and heavy)—for ALEX, FRANCES and KATE.
5. Copy of *The New Yorker*, any issue of May, 1936.
6. Curling iron, electric, cord attached, but not practical (FRANCES).
7. Hand mirror.
8. Two letters, stamped, addressed: "Miss Sally Prescott, Norton House, Smith College, Northampton, Mass." Letters not identical. Work on Left table.
9. One French phone.
10. One Western Union telegram, no envelope, with following message: "Sam Thatcher, Harkness Quad, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. Expecting you hourly, gay dancing fool that I am. Alexandra Regina."
11. Matched woman's travelling case and hat-box, preferably light airplane luggage, slightly used, nearly new. Can be empty.

ACT TWO; SCENE I

1. One alarm clock, feminine type, used, in working condition.
2. At least twenty college textbooks, all sizes, all conditions.
3. Scratch pad.
4. Used portable typewriter. Does not have to be in working condition.
5. Pair of used women's hose, with runs.
6. Eyebrow tweezers.
7. Brassiere.
8. Pair of women's mules.
9. College tablets.
10. College notebooks—can be doubled from Act One if necessary.
11. Fittings for dressing-table—Perfume atomizer, woman's comb, nail buffer, nail file, Cutex set (used), lotions, etc., and one hair brush. Hand mirror, not the same as works in Act One.
12. About half a dozen pencils, various sizes, on study table.
13. One fountain pen.
14. One pen-holder pen.
15. Bottle of ink, eraser, blotters on both desks.
16. Electric phonograph. Two records: "I'm In The Mood For Love" and "Karabali."
17. Something, such as a pair of ice skates, a single roller skate, bicycle clips, that look goofy and comical.
18. Old letters, dance programs, dance favors, perhaps a New York play-bill, on study table. General effect of untidy and feminine litter.

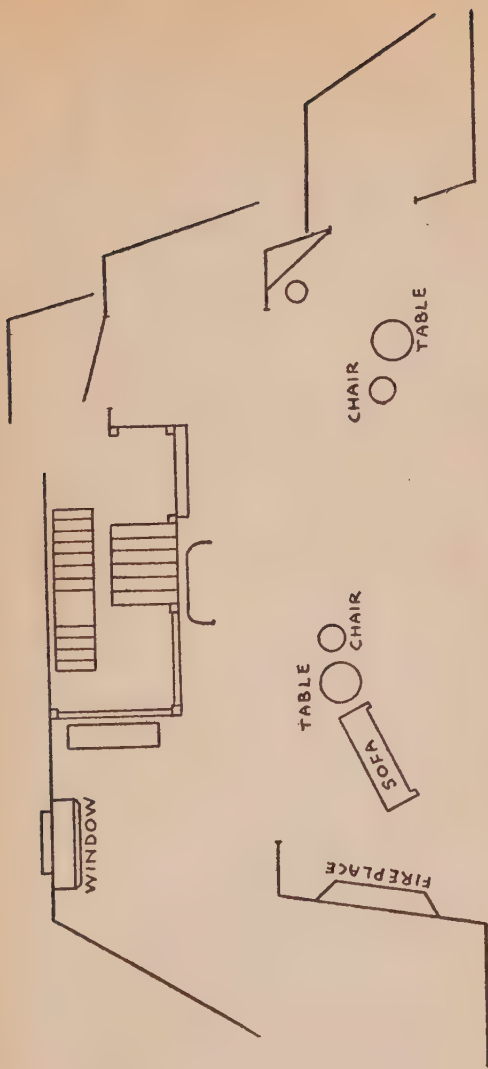
SCENE II

1. Correspondence card and envelope. The envelope blank; anything can be written on the card (KATE).

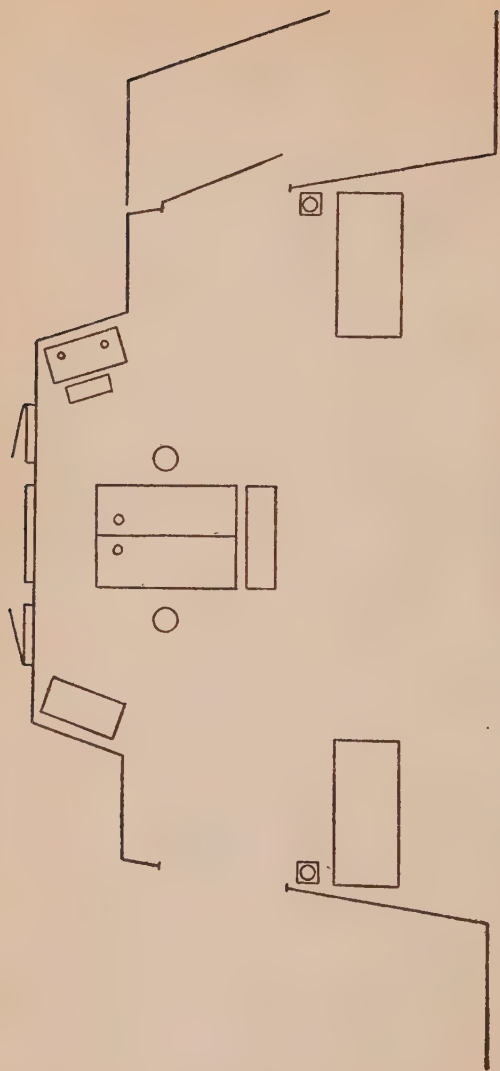
2. Pencil, works on table, onstage side of divan, Stage Right (MILDRED).
3. Flowers for two vases, works offstage Right. One vase onstage. One vase works offstage Right (MILDRED).
4. Chewing gum (HATTON) works on prop table, offstage Left.
5. Western Union telegram and envelope.

ACT THREE

1. Woman's travelling case, same as Act One, but not the hat-box, works on carry-off platform upstage Center (SALLY).
2. Roll of two-inch gauze bandage—about a yard used each performance (SAM)—put on offstage.
3. The electric phonograph from Scene One, Act Two, works offstage Left in this Act, and other side of "I'm In The Mood For Love" plays.



SCENE DESIGN
ACT 1-ACT 2-SCENE 2-ACT 3
SPRING DANCE



SCENE DESIGN
ACT 2-SCENE I
SPRING DANCE

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Comedy. 3 acts. By Helen Jerome. 10 males, 16 females. 3 interiors. Costumes, 1796.

An immensely successful production in New York and London. The play concentrates on Mrs. Bennet's determination to get her daughters married. Jane, Elizabeth and Lydia are likely-looking girls in an unlikely-looking period when a woman's one possible career is matrimony. To be a wife was success. Anything else was failure. Jane and her Mr. Bingley, and Lydia with her Mr. Wickham, are quite content with the god of things as they are, but not Elizabeth! She actually refuses to marry Mr. Collins, whom she openly deplores, and Mr. Darcy whom she secretly adores. The play is the story of the duel between Elizabeth and her pride and Darcy and his prejudice. Each gives in before the evening is over and pride and prejudice meet halfway. An ideal costume play, for schools, colleges and Little Theatres. "This particular reviewer went to the Music Box last night prepared to be bored, and remained to be interested."—*Percy Hammond, N. Y. Herald Tribune*. "An intelligent script."—*Brooks Atkinson, N. Y. Times*. In ordering please mention name of author of this version.

(Royalty, \$25.00.) Price, 75 cents.

LEAVE IT TO PSMITH

Farce-comedy. 3 acts. By Ian Hay and P. G. Wodehouse. 10 males, 8 females. 3 interiors, exterior. Modern costumes.

This is one of the most amusing and rollicking farces that has come our way in a long time. Freddie Bosham is in love with Phyllis Jackson but her father won't let them marry unless Freddie gets a job or at least shows good faith by putting some money into the Jackson Jam business. Of course the first choice is out of the question, for the Boshams are aristocrats and never labor. How Freddie manages to raise the money through the assistance of Ronald Eustace Psmith, a general fixer-up, is hilariously unfolded in three acts of fast action and excitement brought about by the endeavors of several crooks to steal the jewels belonging to Freddie's domineering stepmother. The cast consists of an assortment of some of the most unusual and laugh-provoking characters ever presented on the stage. This play is bound to satisfy any audience that enjoys a good evening's spoofing.

(Royalty, \$25.00.) Price, 75 cents.

GROWING PAINS

Comedy. 3 acts. By Aurania Rouverol. 7 males, 8 females. 1 set (patio). Modern costumes.

Produced originally at the Ambassador Theatre in New York. George and Terry are the son and daughter of Professor and Mrs. McIntyre who struggle valiantly to lead their children through the difficult phases of adolescence, so familiar to us all. Terry is shown outgrowing the tomboy stage, and unable to play with the boys on an equal status. She finds herself thrown back on her feminine resources; and how she tries out her "resources," makes this play an illuminating study of feminine psychology. George McIntyre, the boy adolescent, goes through the customary symptoms of his age—begging his parents for a car—and falling victim of the wiles of Prudence, a successful "vamp" in the neighborhood. At a party George is sent out for some more ice cream. In his rush to get back for his dance with Prudence, he passes a traffic light, and is pursued home by an officer, subsequently is hauled off to jail, loses Prudence, but discovers a new blue-eyed blonde in the neighborhood.

(Royalty, \$25.00.) Price, 75 cents.

THE BISHOP MISBEHAVES

Farce-comedy. 3 acts. By Frederick Jackson. 7 males, 3 females. 2 interiors. Modern costumes.

Produced originally by John Golden at the Court Theatre, New York, with Walter Connolly in the leading role. Here is the story of the Bishop, an elderly and saintly dignitary, who stops by accident with his charming and quaint sister at a roadside inn just after there has been a hold-up and robbery. The Bishop has always had a secret love for detective stories and here is a chance to apply some of his choicest solutions. His sister, thrilled with the excitement of it all, eagerly joins in. The Bishop, now playing policeman, gobbles up clues and discovers the stolen jewels. Deftly removing them from a mug on the wall he leaves in their stead, one of his calling cards, and proceeds to his home to await developments. The developments arrive in the form of three ruffians, the masked hero in evening clothes, and the attractive heroine who had engineered the robbery. From now on it is a game of outguessing, turning tables, turning out lights, knife-brandishing, and gun-play, until the Bishop finally emerges triumphant to bestow his blessing on the young hero and charming heroine.

(Royalty, \$25.00.) Price, 75 cents.

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BARRY, PHILIP

SPRING DANCE

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